CLARENTINE.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

CLARENTINE.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

IN the county of Devon, diſtant four miles even from the neareſt town, and ſurrounded only by woods, and a few thinly-ſcattered cottages, ſtood the ancient family manſion of Sir James Delmington, Bart. lately deceaſed. This habitation, at once gloomy, ſtately, and extenſive, was now the conſtant reſidence of Lady Delmington his widow, her children, an orphan niece, and a conſiderable eſtabliſhment of domeſtics.

Married extremely young, Lady Delmington, though the mother of ſo large a family, was ſtill in the prime of life, handſome, elegant, and admired. Her birth,

though not noble, was reſpectable; her education had been attended to with care; her diſpoſition was benevolent and amiable; and her manners poliſhed, eaſy, and unaffected.

As her income ſince the death of Sir James had been conſiderably diminiſhed; and with a view to the future advantage of her younger children, ſhe wiſhed to avoid every unneceſſary expence, ſhe had from the moment that event took place determined upon reſiding wholly at Delmington Houſe. There, educating her girls entirely at home, upon the moſt economical, yet rational plan, ſhe lived retired, and almoſt unknown; contentedly devoting herſelf to the duties of her ſituation, and unrepiningly dedicating the beſt part of her life to ſolitude, tender maternal cares, vigilant attention, and inceſſant anxiety.

Her eldeſt ſon, Edgar, who inherited his father's title, and his father's excellence of heart and diſpoſition, was at this period about fifteen. To a countenance open, intelligent, and animated, he united a frankneſs, a generoſity of character, and a ſweetneſs of temper, rarely to be ſurpaſſed. Though wild, thoughtleſs, and impetuous,

impetuous, he was never unfeeling, never malevolent or deliberately reſentful. His paſſions were violent, but by a little management eaſily curbed; and by a mild remonſtrance and ſupplicating look entirely ſubdued.

Frederick the ſecond ſon, was a year younger, and in every ſenſe of the word merited the appellation of a compleat *pickle*; careleſs, inattentive, utterly devoid of ſerious application, all he learnt, he learnt by chance, and the help of quick parts, and a retentive memory. Indifferent to the good opinion, regardleſs of the convenience of others, his own amuſement was his ſole ſtudy, his own gratification his ſole purſuit. In perſon he was light and active; in underſtanding penetrating and acute; to a blunt readineſs at *repartee*, that ſometimes reſembled wit, he added an imagination fertile beyond example in deviſing ſchemes of miſchief; and a boldneſs unparalleled in putting them in execution.

Hitherto brought up at home by a neighbouring clergyman, Mr. Aukland, under the eye of their mother, the time was now arrived when they were firſt to emerge into the world, and quit the ſhel-

tering roof that had ſo long been the boundary of all their thoughts—the ſcene of all their youthful happineſs. At the period when this hiſtory commences, they were upon the point of ſetting out for Eton, whence, accompanied by Mr. Aukland, they were afterwards to proceed to one of the univerſities.

On the morning of a beautiful autumnal day, they met by five o'clock in the great breakfaſt parlour to wait the arrival of the chaiſe that was to convey them away. Their mother, dreading by her own to heighten their depreſſion, purpoſely forbore joining them, though already awake, and liſtening with fond ſolicitude to every ſound that aſcended from below. Their ſiſters, however, either leſs deeply affected, or leſs aware of their own weakneſs, preſently ran down to them, followed by their little couſin, once more to repeat the "farewels" of the preceding night—and to ſee them depart.

With heavy hearts they now heard the chaiſe approach. Mr. Aukland, whom it had ſtopped and called for in its way from Lyſton, the market-town at which it had been hired, refuſed to alight; the two boys, therefore, forcing an air of gaiety

their

their hearts were far from feeling, haſtily embraced their ſiſters—looked up with gliſtening eyes towards their mother's window, and then running down the ſteps, ſprung into the chaiſe, and in a few moments were out of ſight.

The girls, arm in arm, the tears ſtreaming down their cheeks, ſtood at the threſhold of the door, watching the rapid progreſs of the carriage as it drove down the avenue, till it was not only beyond their view, but even beyond their hearing. Melancholy and ſilent they then turned back, ſighing to think how many months muſt elapſe before thoſe dear brothers could be reſtored to their wiſhes.

Some hours had paſſed ſince their departure, and Lady Delmington, with all the tranquillity ſhe could aſſume, was ſitting after dinner at work in her dreſſing-room, when a ſervant entered to announce the approach of viſitors.

Detached from the world as ſhe had long been, and unuſed to the ſight of evening company, this was no very welcome information at a time like the preſent. It was impoſſible, however, to be denied—the carriage that was arriving had nearly reached the houſe, and the children

were all in ſight upon the lawn before it. She gave orders, therefore, to the man to ſay ſhe was at home, and to come back and inform her who the viſitors were before ſhe went down.

Accordingly, in a few minutes he returned to ſay Mr. Somerſet was below.

"Mr. Somerſet?" repeated Lady Delmington, "then call Clarentine, and ſend her into the parlour to me."

So ſaying, ſhe haſtened down; but on opening the room door, ſhrunk back a moment from an involuntary emotion of ſurpriſe, ſo little did the perſon ſhe there beheld reſemble him ſhe expected to find. Inſtead of a man near ſixty, feeble and infirm, ſhe ſaw a young naval officer not more than twenty, whoſe figure was all elegance, whoſe countenance was noble and ſpirited, and whoſe firſt addreſs, at once reſpectful and manly, prepoſſeſſed her ſtrongly in his favour.

"I have done myſelf the honour of waiting upon your Ladyſhip," ſaid he, "at the deſire of my father, to enquire after the young relation you are ſo good as to countenance, and to aſſure her of the pleaſure it will give him to hear ſhe is well and happy."

"I thank

"I thank you, Sir, in her name," anſwered Lady Delmington, "for the kindneſs of this viſit, and hope in a few minutes to preſent her to you to repeat thoſe thanks in perſon."

She then requeſted him to be ſeated, and began ſome general enquiries after his family.

His anſwers, ſenſible and polite; the unaffected eaſe and gentleneſs of his manners; and the expreſſion of good-humour and benevolence that lighted up his countenance, ſo highly intereſted Lady Delmington, that ſhe was tempted, more than once, to doubt the poſſibility of his being the ſon of a man ſhe had always had ſo much reaſon to conſider as his direct oppoſite in every thing. His mother's virtues, however, recurred to her memory; and, in this amiable young man, ſhe rejoiced to behold the worthy ſucceſſor of ſo excellent a woman, forgetting whilſt ſhe converſed with him the object of his viſit, and the delay of her little inmate.

Mr. Somerſet, however, at length drew out his watch, and ſtarting at the lateneſs of the hour, aroſe with an intention to depart. Lady Delmington preſſed him to ſtay tea; but he aſſured her it was im-

poſſible, as he had a friend waiting for him at Lyſton, with whom he was that night to travel ſeveral miles further.

"I ſhall be in your neighbourhood, however," added he, "ſome weeks, and if your Ladyſhip will permit me, ſhall certainly do myſelf the honour of calling again very ſoon."

"I earneſtly hope you will," cried Lady Delmington, "ſince, not only the untimely abſence of our little Clarentine, but the ſhortneſs of this viſit, calls loudly upon you for another."

She then rang the bell, and Mr. Somerſet's carriage being ready, he bowed, and left the houſe.

Surpriſed and concerned at the extraordinary, and now, almoſt alarming diſappearance of her ward, Lady Delmington went out into the lawn as ſoon as her viſitor had left her, to enquire of her children, which way they thought it probable ſhe was gone, and how long ſhe had quitted them. To the firſt of theſe queſtions they were unable to give any anſwer; to the laſt, they replied, that ſhe had not been with them for near two hours, nor Emma, their youngeſt ſiſter, neither.

Lady

Lady Delmington's uneaſineſs, encreaſed rather than leſſened by this intelligence, now prompted her to ſend a ſervant into the village in ſearch of Clarentine; but at the very moment ſhe was giving directions to that effect, one of the little girls came running towards her to ſay Mr. Somerſet's carriage was coming back again!

Extremely aſtoniſhed, Lady Delmington ruſhed out once more, and waited near the entrance of the Hall the approach of the carriage, which now ſlowly drove up, and at length ſtopped. The ſervant who attended it ſprung off his horſe, and opening the door, the firſt object Lady Delmington beheld was the young Clarentine, pale and ſenſeleſs, ſupported in the arms of Mr. Somerſet!

Terrified beyond all meaſure, and almoſt dreading to enquire what had happened, Lady Delmington had only voice to utter an incoherent exclamation, before Mr. Somerſet, alighting, and lifting Clarentine out of the carriage, carried her himſelf into the houſe, and placed her on a ſopha in the neareſt room.

There, whilſt Lady Delmington's woman, who had now been ſummoned, was buſied in uſing every means for her reco-

very, and the reſt of the children were all ſtanding round her, with looks of conſternation and diſmay, Mr. Somerſet gave a brief account of the accident that threw her into that ſituation.

"I was driving extremely quick through the village, when, from a cottage by the road ſide, I ſaw a young perſon ruſh forward almoſt under the horſes feet, and with an agonizing ſhriek call out repeatedly to the driver to ſtop. Providentially he did ſo in time to ſave her, and when I jumped out, I found her ſtretched upon the ground, graſping firmly with one hand the cloaths of a child, to ſecure whom it was, in all probability, ſhe endangered herſelf ſo much. I raiſed her up inſtantly, and attempted to comfort and reſtore her; but her fright, and the fall that ſucceeded it, had totally deprived her of ſpeech and motion, and had not the child directed me whither to convey her, I ſhould have been compelled to have left her with the people of the cottage."

"That child," cried Lady Delmington, raiſing her eyes in thankfulneſs to heaven, "that child was mine—my little Emma! Where, where is ſhe now, Sir!"

"In

"In perfect ſafety, Madam, with a woman who appeared juſt as I was coming away, and ſaid ſhe was your Ladyſhip's houſekeeper."

Clarentine at that moment beginning to ſtir, Lady Delmington's whole attention was directed towards her. In a few moments her recollection ſeemed to be returning, and looking with ſurpriſe around her, like a perſon juſt waking from a heavy ſtupor, ſhe uttered in a low voice the name of Emma—aſked if ſhe was ſafe? and on being anſwered in the affirmative, fixed her eyes with an air of wild aſtoniſhment on young Somerſet, and ſaid to her aunt—

"Who is that?"

Somerſet ſmiled; and Lady Delmington anſwered—

"An old friend of your's, my love, though a forgotten one; Mr. Frederick Somerſet, your couſin."

"Mr. Frederick Somerſet!" repeated Clarentine, a faint glow of pleaſure tinging her pale cheeks. "Oh, I ought never to have forgotten *him!* His former kindneſs to me—"

"Huſh, huſh, my dear Clarentine," interrupted young Somerſet, affectionately

taking her hand, "this is not a time to ſtrain your memory for inſtances of paſt friendſhip; we ſhall meet again very ſoon I hope; when, if you are better, we will talk over former days, and renew our early acquaintance. Reſt and quiet are, at preſent, what you moſt require; therefore adieu—I ſhall wait upon Lady Delmington on Friday at furtheſt."

Then congratulating her Ladyſhip upon the happy termination of this alarming event, he once more took leave, and departed.

When he was gone, Clarentine was interrogated by her aunt upon the ſubject of Emma, and aſked how it happened, that without having obtained permiſſion, ſhe had been ſo imprudent as to venture out with her ſo far?

This was a queſtion ſhe found it no difficult matter to anſwer ſatisfactorily. The houſe-keeper, ſhe ſaid, having told her in the morning that Edgar's poor old nurſe was very ill, ſhe had prevailed upon her, as ſoon as dinner was over, to let her walk down with her to ſee her. Emma, ſhe added, being with her at that moment, the houſe-keeper herſelf had propoſed taking her with them; and it was whilſt

they

they were talking to the nurſe the ſound of the carriage firſt alarmed her, and induced her, on finding Emma had run out into the road, to ruſh after her in that frantic manner.

This ſimple recital perfectly ſatisfied Lady Delmington, who expreſſed the utmoſt gratitude to her young ward for the courage and goodneſs of heart that had made her the means of preſerving her helpleſs little charge.

CHAP. II.

CLARENTINE Delmington was the daughter of Sir James Delmington's only brother, who, whilſt abroad on his travels, had married a young foreigner of diſtinction, whoſe family, one of the proudeſt in France, had, on the diſcovery of the match, utterly renounced her, and thrown her wholly on the mercy of her huſband's friends for ſupport and countenance. Young Delmington's father was ſtill living, and received the firſt account of this unhappy affair, and of the arrival of his ſon

in England, at the very time he was diſpoſing himſelf to make his will, in conſequence of which, nothing having been ſettled on the younger children, he, in a moment of paſſion and reſentment, totally diſinherited this unfortunate young man, and died ſhortly afterwards, without either ſeeing him, or altering his cruel determination.

Thunderſtruck at this intelligence, pennyleſs, hopeleſs, and deprived of every other reſource, young Delmington wrote to his brother, Sir James, then in Italy, to ſtate his ſituation, and implore his council and aſſiſtance; before any anſwer could arrive, however, deſpair and indigence prompted him, forſaking his wife and infant child, to enliſt into the military ſervice of the Eaſt-India Company, and to embark with the troops that were then ſetting ſail for Bengal.

He had been gone nearly a week, and his ill-fated wife, ignorant of the language of the country, deſolate, and almoſt reduced to her laſt guinea, was weeping over her unconſcious babe, when a lady in a very elegant carriage ſtopped at her door, and without ſending up her name, entered the houſe and deſired to be ſhewn

to

to Mrs Delmington's apartment. This friendly viſitor was Mrs. Somerſet, ſiſter to Sir James and young Delmington, with whoſe recent embarkation and unhappy ſtory ſhe was already acquainted. To her, at his departure, the melancholy wanderer had, by letter, recommended theſe innocent and pitiable ſufferers.

"I am come, Madam," ſaid ſhe, in a voice of the moſt ſoothing kindneſs, as ſhe advanced towards the lovely and aſtoniſhed ſtranger, "to take you from this lonely and melancholy abode, and to offer you every conſolation, and perform every ſervice for you in my power. My name," added ſhe, taking her hand, "is Somerſet; I am ſiſter to your huſband—and already in anticipation, ſiſter, and friend to you."

"Ah! Madam," cried the young foreigner, preſſing to her boſom the hand that held hers,—"I flattered not myſelf, with the hopes of exciting this generous ſenſibility in any Engliſh heart—I have forfeited all claim to Engliſh kindneſs!—But this infant," continued ſhe, looking at the child ſhe held in her arms—"this infant may perhaps better merit your goodneſs; ſhe was born in your land, ſhe

is your country-woman, and ſurely ought not, in juſtice, to ſhare the puniſhment due to her mother's errors!"

That mother, not yet eighteen, born to affluence, long inured to ſplendour, a ſtranger till now alike to care and adverſity, ſurvived but a ſhort time the departure of her huſband; ſhe went into a deep decline, and expired ſome months after in the houſe, almoſt in the arms of Mrs. Somerſet.

Thus early deprived of both her parents, the little Clarentine was now committed entirely to the protection of her father's family. Mr. Somerſet for ſome time ſuffered his wife's compaſſion for her to exert itſelf without reſtraint; but ſhortly growing weary of a preference he felt not himſelf inclined to beſtow; meanly jealous of the attachment his wife and ſon had conceived for her, he firſt murmured at, then openly oppoſed every new act of benevolence Mrs. Somerſet's kindneſs of heart prompted her to perform. Anxious for the fate of her intereſting little ward, on the firſt appearance of this illiberal diſcontent, Mrs. Somerſet applied to Sir James for advice and aſſiſtance, and on his return to England, heard with gratitude

titude and delight, that he now meant to take the charge of his niece wholly on himself.

She was accordingly, when just entering her sixth year, removed to Delmington House, and received by Sir James and his wife with equal pity and affection. From that hour she had constantly resided with them, and since the death of her first patroness Mrs. Somerset, known no other protectors, no other friends.

To save appearances Mr. Somerset, it is true, had written twice or thrice in the course of seven years, to ask after her; he had once even, when on a visit in the same county, honoured her with a personal enquiry; but never had testified the least intention of assuring her a provision, or, wealthy as he was, of participating with the Delmingtons in the expences of her board and education.

Not so young William; though seven years older than the little Clarentine, and but rarely at home whilst she inhabited his father's house, his mother's expressions of fondness towards her, the solicitude and tenderness with which she always spoke of her, had made a deep and lasting impression on his generous heart. He pitied

pitied her for her own, and loved her for the ſake of his mother; ſhe had been her favourite, her nurſling, the object for many years of all her thoughts; and William, who cheriſhed Mrs. Somerſet's memory with enthuſiaſm, transferred to the child of her adoption a ſhare of that affection, he had, when living, felt for herſelf.

As often therefore as he had an opportunity he had written to Clarentine, and ſent her, in token of his remembrance, ſuch little preſents as her age made acceptable, and his finances would allow; and when, after a ſilence of nine years, the news arrived of the death of her father, who was killed in an engagement between the Engliſh and Mahrattas, then at war with each other, he dictated to his tutor from a ſick bed, and ſigned afterwards a ſolemn promiſe, by which he bound himſelf, whenever his age would permit, and he came into poſſeſſion of the fortune he muſt one day inherit, to ſettle upon her an independant competency for life. This paper, drawn up as he hoped with all due formality, and written by a clergyman, the old and faithful friend of his mother, who had ſeen and often noticed Clarentine

tine in her infancy, he ſent to Sir James the moment it was ſealed, and from that hour had invariably looked upon as a ſacred and irrevocable engagement, which he meant religiouſly to fulfil.

Sir James, in aſtoniſhment unſpeakable at this extraordinary deed from a youth not yet ſeventeen, was affected by the excellence of diſpoſition it denoted, yet by no means flattered into a hope, ſuch promiſes were likely ever to be realized. The diſſipation of that world into which his nephew was juſt entering, the temptations he might have to put his money to leſs benevolent uſes, or at leaſt, the verſatility and various purſuits of his age—all, all, he feared, would contribute to eraſe from his remembrance this act of youthful generoſity; to truſt to it therefore as certain would be cruelty to its object; and Sir James felt too forcibly the helpleſsneſs of her ſituation, to harbour for a moment the idea of conſigning her for future ſupport to the emergency of ſo unſtable a dependance.

With ſo large a family as he had, it was not to be ſuppoſed he could do much for her: a limited proviſion however, nearly equal to what he left his own daughters, he meant

meant to bequeath her, but was taken ſuddenly ill before he could put this benevolent deſign in execution, and breathed his laſt a few days after, leaving her as abſolutely dependant upon his wife, as ſhe had been upon him.

From motives of regard to her huſband's memory, as well as from ignorance where to place her, Lady Delmington ſtill continued to take charge of her, and to treat her with undeviating kindneſs and affection. She was brought up with her own children, more as if born of the ſame parents, than as if ſtationed amongſt them by accidental circumſtances, and during the firſt ſeven years of her reſidence with them, ſcarcely for a moment had had cauſe to regret her ſituation.

Since the birth of little Emma, who was now three years old, and the death of Sir James, many of the ſervants of Delmington Houſe had been diſcharged. Clarentine then undertook the ſole care of Emma, ſlept with her, dreſt her, and was her conſtant companion. Lady Delmington felt the leſs reluctance to this, as ſhe knew the child was uncommonly fond of her young Governeſs, and as ſhe perceived, that though of an age, when moſt

moſt girls require conſtant obſervance themſelves, Clarentine had prudence enough to preſerve her little charge from danger, and penetration enough to diſcover, and check with mildneſs, all her infantine caprices and follies.

The partiality of Edgar for his little couſin, who had long been his diſtinguiſhed favourite, made him at firſt view this new office in the light of a degradation, and he often expreſſed to his brother his diſcontent on the ſubject. Frederick though far leſs intereſted in the cauſe, for ſome time joined in declaring the ſame ſentiments, and both conceived a ſtrong, but ſhort-lived averſion to the innocent child. Clarentine, however, at length reaſoned them out of this abſurd prejudice; proteſted ſhe had herſelf ſolicited the truſt, and far from feeling inclined to murmur at, conſidered it as the only means ſhe had of teſtifying her gratitude to their mother, for her kindneſs to herſelf. This explanation ſomewhat appeaſed Edgar, and totally ſatisfied Frederick; yet as often as they could, they ſought to draw her from the nurſery, and engage her to partake in their own amuſements. To pacify them, ſhe ſometimes complied,

though

though always glad to ſeize the firſt opportunity of eluding their vigilance, in order to ſlip from them.

By degrees, however, their conſtant readineſs to oblige her (and even Frederick loved to oblige her); their goodnature in deſiſting from whatever ſeemed to give her pain; their warmth in ſupporting her cauſe whenever any difference aroſe between her and their ſiſters, won her little heart, and taught her to prefer their ſociety to almoſt every other. Not however in their boiſterous and turbulent hours did ſhe ſo much love them, as when ſitting on a bench at the end of the garden, with Edgar on one ſide, and Frederick on the other, ſhe could *pore* over with them ſome of the delightful adventures in the *Arabian Nights*; or wonder, laugh, and cry by turns at the miraculous eſcapes of *Robinſon Cruſoe*, and the affectionate ſimplicity of his man *Friday*.

Many alſo were the opportunities ſhe had of rewarding them for their friendly zeal, on different occaſions, in her behalf. If by ſome wild and boyiſh trick they had excited Lady Delmington's diſpleaſure, Clarentine apologized, Clarentine pleaded for them, and obtained a quicker pardon;

pardon; if after running about the whole afternoon, they returned at evening heated and alarmed, to recount ſome pickle-exploit, or fearful miſadventure, Clarentine hurried them to their room, ſoftened the intelligence in her diſcloſure of it to their mother, and carried them in ſecret, whatever ſhe could beg from the houſe-keeper, or ſave, unſuſpected, from her own ſupper.

Once too, poor Edgar had been extremely ill A fever, the conſequence of having over-heated himſelf, rendered him delirious near a week, and threw him into imminent danger. Clarentine, then about eleven years old, ſcarcely left his room a moment, ſhared in all his mother's fatigue, helped to beguile the long hours of her confinement and attendance; read, talked to him by his bed-ſide when he got better, and ſuffered no one but herſelf to adminiſter to him the medicines that were preſcribed: neither from any one elſe would Edgar, when ſenſible, receive them; and upon no one elſe would he lean for ſupport, when firſt beginning ſlowly to pace his chamber.

Thus, in reciprocal acts of kindneſs, were ſpent their earlieſt years; and thus began

began an attachment equally delightful to both parties, equally ſincere, and equally undiſguiſed.

CHAP. III.

THE time of Edgar's abſence was to Clarentine the moſt melancholy ſhe had ever known. She had now no gay and partial companion conſtantly to partake in her amuſements; to walk out with her after Emma was in bed; to rejoice with when any particular indulgence was granted her: with Edgar, her chief ſource of happineſs was gone, and all that remained proportionably diminiſhed in value.

Yet Clarentine had a heart diſpoſed to love with fondneſs all around her. Lady Delmington ſhe honoured and reſpected like a ſecond mother. Harriet, her eldeſt daughter, ſhe regarded in the light of a ſiſter, and felt inclined to beſtow on her all a ſiſter's tenderneſs; but Harriet was unſteady and capricious; one day mildly affectionate, the next rude and imperious.

Sophia, the ſecond ſiſter, with a heart that did her honour, and a diſpoſition

the

the moſt friendly and generous, was however ſo extremely wild and thoughtleſs, that notwithſtanding the warmth and ſincerity of her attachment for Clarentine, it was not in her nature to forbear tormenting her four-and-twenty hours together. She had too much of her brother Frederick about her, indeed, to reſpect *any body*, ſo long, except her mother, and even *her*, ſhe often caught herſelf involuntarily endeavouring to perplex and ſurpriſe.

By every other poſt, letters either from Edgar or Frederick regularly arrived, and lightened up every face at Delmington Houſe with ſmiles of gladneſs. Clarentine treaſured hers from Edgar even with romantic fondneſs; read them all till ſhe had learnt them by heart, and valued them above every other thing in her poſſeſſion.

Meanwhile, Lady Delmington, though ſhe was herſelf in moſt reſpects qualified to educate her daughters, could not but be ſenſible there were many little elegant accompliſhments proper for girls of family, ſhe was by no means adequate to teaching them. Dancing, muſic, and drawing were of this number; and, as at Lyſton, the

neareſt town, there was a large boarding-ſchool, ſhe ſoon learnt alſo there were maſters, ſuch as ſhe required, who taught on very reaſonable terms. Twice a week, therefore, they were ſummoned to Delmington Houſe; and Clarentine, though nothing was abſolutely paid for inſtructing her, by being ſuffered to aſſiſt at the leſſons, reaped nearly as much benefit from them as the ſcholars themſelves. In dancing and drawing, particularly, ſhe made great progreſs; but muſic, though her ſpeaking voice was ſoft and touching, ſhe ſoon found would require far more time and application, than ſhe had leiſure to beſtow upon it. There being but one inſtrument in the houſe, and that being almoſt always in uſe, ſhe had few or no opportunities of practiſing; and therefore, as far as related to the ſcientific part of the art, in a very ſhort time gave it up wholly; ſtill, however, when alone, or with Emma, for her "ſole auditreſs," ſhe delighted to ſing in wild, and not unpleaſing tones, the ſimple ballads that had words ſhe loved.

Every day Lady Delmington, in a large gothic chamber ſhe called the *ſchool-room*, aſſembled her little family to repeat to her

their

their leſſons, receive their taſks for the following morning, read to her, and practiſe either muſic or drawing. When this was over, ſhe made them ſit down to work, and till two o'clock kept them ſeriouſly employed. The reſt of the day, at leaſt as much of it as they could ſpare from the buſineſs of learning their ſeveral leſſons for the morrow, was their own, and might be ſpent in the garden, or the houſe, as they pleaſed.

The few families that had viſited Lady Delmington ſince the death of Sir James, chiefly called in of a morning and returned before dinner, as it was well known ſhe had given up all eating company the moment ſhe became a widow. Sometimes, indeed, two or three of her neareſt neighbours, during the long evenings of ſummer, came to her to tea. Neither Clarentine, nor her little couſins, however, appeared on theſe formal occaſions for more than a quarter of an hour, during which, they drank their tea ſtanding, eat their dry bread in utter ſilence, and then, making a profound curtſy, joyfully retired; Clarentine, to undreſs her little Emma, the Miſs Delmingtons, to their own amuſements.

One evening, about a fortnight after the departure of Edgar and Frederick, Lady Delmington received a ſecond viſit from Mr. Somerſet. He came on horſe-back, and perceiving, as he approached the houſe, a group of children walking and converſing together near the avenue, diſmounted, and giving his horſe to his ſervant, drew near them. Clarentine inſtantly recollected him, and running up to him, her eyes ſparkling with pleaſure, offered to conduct him to her aunt.

Gratified by a reception ſo cordial, he accepted the propoſal, took her by the hand, and walked with her into the hall, followed by the other children.

Lady Delmington, rejoicing again to ſee him, welcomed him with diſtinguiſhed politeneſs; and the evening afterwards turning out extremely rainy, preſſed him, with ſuch unfeigned earneſtneſs to accept a bed at her houſe, that ſhe ſoon ſucceeded in her application, and prevailed upon him to ſend a note to his friend to inform him of the reaſon of his ſtay.

During the following day, the whole of which he ſpent at Delmington, Clarentine, enchanted with the mixture of vivacity

and ſoftneſs in his character, with the extreme reſpect he paid to Lady Delmington, the pleaſantry with which he treated her children, and, above all, the affectionate intereſt he ſeemed to feel for her, never, but when indiſpenſably obliged to it by her attendance on Emma, left the room he ſat in. The familiarity with which he addreſſed her could not have been humiliating, even had ſhe been older; it ſeemed to be the effect of brotherly kindneſs and partiality; was never ill-bred, but always gentle, friendly, and indulgent.

Lady Delmington beheld with pleaſure the regard he ſhewed her, and hoped much benefit might be derived from it to her young ward. William Somerſet, an only ſon; heir to immenſe poſſeſſions; ſo nearly allied to her; and, with a heart ſo beneficent and compaſſionate, could not, ſhe thought, now he beheld her, reflect upon Clarentine's deſtitute circumſtances, without feeling all thoſe noble intentions he had formerly avowed for her revived, in their fulleſt force. At all events, his countenance and friendſhip could not but be deſirable to her; and as ſuch, was ſtrengthened to the utmoſt of her Ladyſhip's power, by the well-merited praiſes

and encomiums ſhe beſtowed on the heart and diſpoſition of her niece.

At parting, Mr. Somerſet, after taking leave of Clarentine, with a degree of tenderneſs that deeply touched her, put into her hand five guineas, and promiſed to ſend her a watch, and ſome books he had before mentioned to her, the moment he got to town. She ſaw him ſet off with tears—walked with him to the end of the avenue, and when he there mounted his horſe, and again bade her farewel, called out to him repeatedly to come again, and followed him with her eyes till he was out of ſight.

CHAP. IV.

THE firſt year of the two Delmingtons abſence from home was almoſt expired, and their approaching holidays were drawing near, when, at once to celebrate their return, and the birth-day of her eldeſt daughter, who had now entered her fourteenth year, Lady Delmington announced her intention of giving a ball to all

all the little gentry in the neighbourhood. The girls cheeks glowed at this intelligence; they rapturouſly embraced their indulgent mother, and ſpringing towards the door, flew up to Clarentine's room to impart to her the tranſporting tidings.

Faithful to her promiſe, Lady Delmington, on the ſecond day after her ſon's return, iſſued her cards of invitation; gave orders to have the drawing-room prepared, and ſent to Lyſton to beſpeak the beſt band of muſic the town would afford.

The happy day at length arrived, and the little family was juſt ſitting down to dinner, every heart beating with expectation of approaching pleaſure, when, with a ſlow and meaſured pace, they ſaw driving up the avenue an old-faſhioned poſt-chaiſe, attended by a grey-headed footman, who alighting at the hall door, rang, and announced Mrs. Margaret Harrington.

Frederick, on hearing the name, ſtarted in an extacy of delight, from his chair, and cutting two or three mad capers, held out his hand to Sophia, who ſat next him, and ſhaking it till he abſolutely compelled her to cry out for mercy, eagerly ex-

claimed—"I give you all joy, good folks! for if the old Lady is not driven to diſtraction by the news of our intended Ball, my name is not Frederick! She could not have come at a better time!—Lord! how ſhe will rave!"

This idea ſo fully poſſeſſed, and ſo highly entertained him, that it was with much difficulty his mother could perſuade him to be quiet, or prevent his running out himſelf to announce the news to her unexpected gueſt.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Margaret, who ſeemed bent upon putting the whole houſe into confuſion, was iſſuing forth her commands concerning her baggage at the entrance of the hall, from whence, with the ſame ſtately pompoſity, ſhe afterwards proceeded to the dining parlour.

Lady Delmington politely advanced towards the door to receive her; there was nothing cordial in her countenance, however, when ſhe addreſſed her, nothing affectionate in her voice; for Mrs. Margaret had the misfortune of having been, time out of mind, her Ladyſhip's decided averſion.

To account in ſome meaſure for this antipathy, it is neceſſary to trace a faint

ſketch

ſketch of Mrs. Margaret's perſon and character. She was firſt couſin to the late Sir James, and at this period conſiderably turned of fifty.

Tall, thin, and maſculine, in height and figure ſhe was truly formidable! Her face was long and narrow, but compoſed of features, which though large had once been handſome. Her voice was extremely loud and harſh—her manners blunt, repulſive, and characteriſtic of the mind within—a mind at once haughty, uncultivated, and filled with prejudices the moſt vulgar and illiberal.

The marriage of *her* relation, Sir James Delmington, Bart. with the daughter of a needy ſpendthrift, an untitled Commoner, had excited her ire to a degree almoſt of madneſs! The girl's beauty, ſhe averred, was no excuſe; a thouſand beauties cried matches in the ſtreets—ſold apples at a ſtall, yet were not therefore ſuppoſed to be qualified to fill a diſtinguiſhed rank in ſociety. It was ſetting his brother a pernicious and dangerous example—would bring ruin upon his family, and diſgrace upon himſelf!

Yet this *fair beggar*, this *needy ſpendthrift's* daughter, had been well received by the

reſt of her huſband's relations; was known to poſſeſs an excellent underſtanding, uncommon elegance of manners, and a feeling and generous heart. At her father's death alſo ſhe came into a fortune of ten thouſand pounds, though, till after that event, it is true ſhe added nothing to Sir James's income.

The aſperity and unauthorized reſentment ſhewn by Mrs. Margaret on this occaſion was yet more inflamed, on her firſt hearing of the imprudent connection Sir James's brother had formed abroad. She imputed it ſolely to the precedent he had given him—raved publicly againſt them both; and for many years avoided all intercourſe, as well with Mrs. Somerſet as Sir James, becauſe the former had given refuge to her brother's orphan—and the latter dared to be happy with a woman *ſhe* had not ſelected.

An unſucceſsful attempt to get into Parliament at a general election, the cloſe of which ſaw him entirely thrown out, firſt prompted Sir James, terrified on account of his children at the temporary derangement of his affairs, to make overtures of reconciliation with the much exaſperated Mrs. Harrington. She was rich, had no

lineal heirs, and had long declared her irrevocable determination of remaining ſingle for life.

Fortunately for Sir James, Mrs. Margaret's invincible curioſity, united to a love of rambling neither age nor infirmities could conquer, facilitated the endeavours of their mutual friends, and once more brought her to his houſe. She had never ſeen Lady Delmington, and, uncharitable as ſhe had been in her cenſures, longed moſt ardently to behold her.

Lady Delmington, naturally inclined to ſatire, by no means favourably prepoſſeſſed towards Mrs. Margaret, and at that period young, gay, and inconſiderate, ſaw her not for the firſt time, without feeling ſtrongly tempted to retaliate her own ridicule with intereſt. She compelled herſelf however, in Sir James's preſence, to behave to her with the moſt exact decorum; but, in his abſence, though ſhe never commenced, always readily ſupported that *aigre-doux* ſort of converſation, which two people, hating each other, yet willing to keep up appearances, ſo well know how to render intelligible and mortifying. Their diſcourſe was profuſely

intermixed with all thoſe ceremonies and unmeaning phraſes, habitual good breeding on one ſide, and a deſire of concealing her ſecret ſentiments on the other, rendered it neceſſary for them to utter. No opportunity was ſuffered to eſcape, after a ſentence of more than uſual bitterneſs had been ſpoken, of begging each other's pardon, and hoping what had been ſaid gave no offence! All which was uttered in a tone of voice, and an expreſſion of countenance ſo diametrically oppoſite to the politeneſs of the words themſelves, that neither could for a moment be miſtaken as to their real meaning.

Such, during the ſix weeks of Mrs. Margaret's firſt viſit, was the way in which the two ladies ſpent their tête-a-tête hours: and, ſuch was the encreaſed diſlike, not to uſe a ſtronger term, with which they parted, that but once had they ever met ſince.

Lady Delmington, whoſe character was now mellowed by time, whoſe ſpirits were depreſſed by the cares of ſo large a family, and who, from regard to the intereſt of her children, ſaw the neceſſity of treating Mrs. Margaret with greater deference, received her, as has already been ſaid, with

with infinite good breeding, but without any addition of attachment.

Being all ſeated at table, the ſweet and innocent countenance of the young Clarentine placed next her little Emma, attending to, and ſerving her with the aſſiduity of a fond mother, attracted the notice, and called forth all the penetrating powers of Mrs. Harrington. She had never ſeen her ſince ſhe was a mere child: but now, at almoſt thirteen, tall, light and graceful, with a face in which ſoftneſs was blended with intelligence, archneſs with good-humour, and animation with ſenſibility, ſhe ſeemed to be an object worthy greater attention. Mrs. Margaret beheld her with involuntary admiration—with mingled diſtruſt and ſurpriſe; diſtruſt on account of the danger that might ſoon accrue to Sir Edgar from a reſidence with ſo faſcinating a creature, and ſurpriſe at the aſtoniſhing improvement, ſhe could not but internally allow, a few years had made in her whole appearance.

Dinner over, the children, but in particular Clarentine, who had been cruelly diſtreſt by her unfeeling ſcrutiny, gladly withdrew to communicate to each other

other the ſeveral opinions they had formed of their new gueſt.

"Will ſhe ſtay long with us, Edgar, do you think?" ſaid Sophia, "I am ſure I hope not," ſaid her ſiſter.

"You hope not, ſilly girl?" ſaid Frederick, "Why I expect more amuſement in one week, from the diſturbance ſhe will create among us, than we could poſſibly obtain in a month without her. It is reckoned high-treaſon to plague any of you; but I flatter myſelf, *this* good lady will be left entirely to my management."

"Indeed!" cried Harriet—"Do you think then mama would have received her ſo civilly, if ſhe had deſigned to make her over to you for a play-thing, and an amuſement?"

Frederick laughed, but made no anſwer; and after ſome further converſation on the ſame ſubject, they ſeparated—Edgar and his brother to ramble down to the village, and their ſiſters to dreſs for the evening.

An hour before the company was expected to arrive, Lady Delmington having ſome neceſſary orders to give, apologized to Mrs Harrington for leaving her, and propoſed with a laugh ſending for her children to ſit with her.

"Aye"

"Aye," cried Mrs Harrington, "do ſo."

Accordingly they were ſummoned, but not being all ready, Clarentine and Harriet went down firſt.

If in her plain morning frock, Clarentine had excited ſo much obſervation, how did ſhe in her preſent ſimple, yet elegant dreſs aſtoniſh the already too apprehenſive Mrs. Harrington? Confounded and diſmayed, ſhe looked at her with ſo jealous and ſuſpicious an eye, that the timid girl ſhrunk abaſhed from the ſurvey, and bluſhing deeply, with a mixed ſenſation of reſentment and mortification, was precipitately retiring. Mrs. Harrington, however, called her back.—

"Come hither child,"—ſaid ſhe.

Clarentine ſlowly, and reluctantly advanced—

"Pray are you to dance this evening."

In a voice ſcarcely audible, Clarentine anſwered, yes, ſhe believed ſo.

"O, you do? and who with, may I aſk."

The ſeverity of tone and aſpect with which this queſtion was uttered, ſo totally diſconcerted Clarentine, that trembling, and almoſt in tears, ſhe faintly replied,

"With

"With my couſin Edgar, Madam."

"With your couſin Edgar?" diſdainfully repeated Mrs. Harrington,—"No, no, child, you muſt not expect it; I ſhall ſpeak to his mother upon the ſubject, it ſhall not be."

Then perceiving through the tranſparent muſlin of her frock a gold watch, ſuſpended to her ſide by a very elegant chain, ſhe added,

"How came you by that watch? Who gave it you? *your couſin Edgar?*"

"No, Madam," anſwered Clarentine, unable any longer to refrain from tears—"Mr. William Somerſet."

"O, he did? there would be no harm if Mr. William Somerſet would do ſomething more uſeful for you. Such trinkets as theſe are not at all fitted to your ſituation."

At that moment Edgar and Frederick, unconſcious of what was paſſing, entered the room together. The former ſeeing Clarentine ſtanding before Mrs Harrington, confuſed, humbled, her head ſunk upon her boſom, her cheek wet with tears, caſt a look of indignation at her unmerciful perſecutor, and flying up to her, took

took her hand, and ſaid in a voice of the moſt affectionate concern—

"What is the matter, my deareſt Clarentine? Who has diſtreſſed you thus? Come, come with me."

As he ſpoke he drew her towards the door, and before Mrs. Harrington could oppoſe it, led her away followed by Frederick, who with a loud laugh, ſnapping his fingers the moment he got into the hall, exclaimed—

"And this is the old crab we are all to be ſo civil to, is it? She ſets out oddly for one who is to exact ſuch univerſal reverence!"

"Huſh, huſh, Frederick, for heaven ſake!" cried the terrified Clarentine—"Suppoſe ſhe ſhould hear you!"

"O for that matter," anſwered Frederick, "I ſhould not much care if ſhe did; it would ſave me the trouble of declaring war againſt her to her face."

Clarentine, trembling leſt this converſation ſhould be overheard, could now be prevailed upon to ſtay no longer: but haſtening through the hall, ſhe was running up ſtairs, when Edgar following her, begged her to ſtop and tell him where ſhe was going?

"To

"To my own room," anſwered ſhe—"I am determined not to come down, nor to ſee her again this evening."

Edgar in vain beſought, entreated her to alter her reſolution. She was inflexible; her pride was hurt, and a ſpirit of obſtinacy awakened in her breaſt that no arguments could ſubdue. Edgar therefore was compelled to give up the attempt, and to ſuffer her, however reluctantly, to proceed.

The chamber that Clarentine inhabited was ſituated in a remote part of the houſe, at the end of a long gallery, that detached it from all the other rooms upon that floor. Juſt under it was the ball-room; and ſhe had not been ſeated half an hour, when from below the ſound of muſic aſcended through her caſements. For a moment ſhe was tempted to forget her anger, and run down; but the words of Mrs. Harrington, her dreadful looks, and the abſolute prohibition ſhe had received to dance with the only partner by whom ſhe could have felt any pleaſure in being ſelected; all theſe circumſtances recurring to her memory, ſhe perſiſted in remaining where ſhe was. Saddened, however, by the gloomy ſtillneſs of her own apartment,

when

when compared to the mirth and gaiety that reigned below, ſhe roſe with an intention of going into the gallery to call for a light: but before ſhe reached the door, the houſemaid entered with little Emma whom ſhe was coming to put to bed. Clarentine, glad of any thing to do, undertook the office herſelf; the maid ſet down the candle and went away.

When the child was undreſſed, and laid down, all Clarentine's reſtleſsneſs returned. She endeavoured, however, to amuſe herſelf with a book, but found it impoſſible. Diſtant voices, the noiſe of opening and ſhutting doors, and above all the cruel ſound of the muſic, perpetually interrupted her. Without well knowing why, ſhe now began to feel ſomething like reſentment againſt Edgar: he ought not, ſhe thought, to have remained ſo long without again attempting to perſuade her down—neither was it kind in his ſiſters to neglect her ſo entirely—"I am ſure," cried ſhe—"I could not have borne their abſence upon ſuch an occaſion, with ſo much indifference!"

Whilſt ſhe was thus ineffectually tormenting herſelf, a light ſtep approaching through the gallery reached her ear. She liſtened,

liſtened, and preſently heard herſelf called. It was the voice of Sophia, who ignorant of the cauſe of her ſecluſion, came to haſten her down.

"Clarentine," cried ſhe, "come and ſee who is juſt arrived; you will be ſo rejoiced! Who do you think it is?"

"Indeed," anſwered Clarentine rather peeviſhly—"I ſhall not attempt to gueſs, —Nobody, I dare ſay, that takes the leaſt intereſt in any thing that relates to me."

"O well, if you are ſo indifferent about the matter, I do not wiſh to force my intelligence upon you; and ſo adieu." Then humming the air of a country dance, ſhe gaily tripped away.

Clarentine, though grateful for this viſit, felt but the more irritated againſt Edgar for his neglect, and determined, coſt her what it would, not to quit her chamber.

Sophia had been gone about ten minutes, when a new ſtep was heard in the gallery; and the next moment her door was opened by young Somerſet!

The book ſhe held dropped from her hand, and ſhe eagerly ran to him.

"Why you poor little ſolitary creature!" cried he, advancing towards her,

"What

"What is the reaſon you ſhut yourſelf up in this ſtrange manner? I won't ſuffer it any longer, my Clarentine; you ſhall go down with me this inſtant."

Clarentine ſmiled; and glad to be at length overcome, ſuffered herſelf without much oppoſition to be drawn out of the room.

In their way down ſtairs, he told her he had been in the houſe about half an hour; had heard nothing before his arrival of the intended *fête*, but on alighting was extremely ſurpriſed to obſerve the number of carriages and buſtle of ſervants at the door. Lady Delmington, however, when ſhe ſaw him, had in a moment explained to him the whole buſineſs, and conducted him into the ball-room, "where," continued he, "after remaining ſome time and not perciving you, I enquired after you of one of the young ladies, who related to me all that had paſſed between you and Mrs. Harrington. Determined, notwithſtanding, to bring you down, I ſent up Sophia to call you; but as ſhe came back unſucceſsful, I ventured to aſk the way to your room myſelf, and was ſhewn to it by Sir Edgar, who left me at the

the head of the ſtairs upon hearing his mother call to him from the hall."

Clarentine reconciled to herſelf by this proof of her own importance, enchanted by the kindneſs of young Somerſet, and exhilarated by her nearer approach to the lights and muſic, entered the ball-room with glowing cheeks, and eyes that beamed with pleaſure.

Her conductor, declaring ſhe ſhould be his partner for the evening, led her towards a ſet that was forming for country dances, and ſtationed her next to Harriet, who, as well as her ſiſter, ſeemed rejoiced to ſee her, and was laviſh in her expreſſions of diſguſt towards Mrs. Harrington.

The reſt of the evening, Clarentine ſpent with undiſturbed ſatisfaction. Her conſiderate partner, who ſeemed bent upon making her amends for the little mortification ſhe had ſuſtained, by the chearfulneſs and good-humour he exerted himſelf, and infuſed into all around her, ſcarcely left her a moment, and evinced ſo ſincere and benevolent a deſire of rendering her happy, that her whole heart felt, and gratefully acknowledged the obligation.

Once

Once however, in the courſe of the evening, her gaiety was for a few moments clouded, by obſerving a degree of gloom on the brow of Edgar as unuſual as it was evident. She was tempted at firſt to go up to him and enquire the cauſe, but loſt ſight of him before ſhe could croſs the room, and afterwards ſaw him no more.

At ſupper ſhe aſked Sophia what was become of him, and learned with great concern that he had complained of not being well, and was gone to bed.

"To tell you the truth," continued Sophia, "I think that was the beſt place for him; he is ſo horrid croſs, and appeared ſo diſcontented with every thing the whole time he ſtaid, that I was vaſtly glad to ſee him walk off."

"And I," ſaid Clarentine, ſmiling—am vaſtly glad to hear he was *croſs*, as that convinces me he was not ill, ſince nobody ever bore illneſs with ſo much ſweetneſs and patience."

At half paſt eleven the whole party ſeparated: and ſoon after twelve, every inhabitant of Delmington Houſe was in bed.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THE next morning, before the reſt of the family aſſembled to breakfaſt, young Somerſet and Clarentine met in the great parlour.

She approached him with the ſame alacrity, the ſame ſmiling countenance ſhe had worn on the preceding evening, and praiſing him for his early riſing, invited him to walk with her in the garden. He agreed to it readily, drew her hand under his arm, and as they proceeded acroſs the lawn ſaid——

"I wiſh to have ſome ſerious converſation with you, my dear Clarentine; but may I rely upon your ſincerity? will you ſpeak to me with openneſs? conſider me as your friend, and diſguiſe nothing from me?"

Clarentine, ſtartled at this preface, looked anxiouſly at him, and half heſitating ſaid—

"Dear Mr. Somerſet, what do you mean? You really frighten me."—

"Believe me, my love," cried he, "that was far from being my intention; I will

will aſk nothing you ought to conceal—nothing but what it may be for your benefit to diſcloſe. Tell me therefore, and tell me truly—are you happy in your preſent ſituation? Are you treated with kindneſs? I have important reaſons for wiſhing to know; and truſt me you ſhall never repent the confidence you place in me."

"Oh!" cried Clarentine earneſtly, "you could not have queſtioned me upon a ſubject I could more readily have anſwered; and I rejoice that you have given me ſuch an opportunity of expreſſing my gratitude to Lady Delmington, my love for all her family! Had I been her child, her *only* child, ſhe could not have treated me with more tenderneſs; the very ſervants are taught by her to behave to me with reſpect and attention, and not a creature in the houſe but ſeems to feel a mixture of pity and affection for me."

The warmth with which ſhe ſpoke brought a colour into her cheeks, an animation into her countenance, that gave ample teſtimony to the truth of every word ſhe had uttered. Young Somerſet, perfectly convinced, preſſed her hand, and ſaid, "Enough, my Clarentine; I am

ſatisfied, and earneſtly hope you will never have cauſe to ſpeak with leſs enthuſiaſm; if, however, that ſhould unhappily one day be the caſe, remember you have in me a friend, whom no time, no circumſtances can ever change; one who loves you tenderly, who will act in your behalf with the zeal of a brother, and upon every occaſion take the deepeſt intereſt in your welfare. Write to me therefore, whenever any difficulty or embarraſſment occurs: make me your confidant; truſt to me implicitly; and be aſſured, that whether diſtant or near you, it ſhall always be my firſt ſtudy to afford you the beſt advice and aſſiſtance in my power. We are related too cloſely not to love each other; the ſame mother cheriſhed, the ſame houſe contained, the ſame kindneſs foſtered us; then, let us not, as we advance in life, neglect to cultivate that affection which ſprung up in our infancy, and was beheld with ſo much pleaſure by our mutual benefactreſs!"

Clarentine, ſoftened even to tears by the kindneſs of this ſpeech, had no voice to articulate her thanks: ſhe could only expreſs them by her looks, and the fervent

gratitude

gratitude with which ſhe raiſed the hand of the generous ſpeaker to her lips: Somerſet haſtily withdrew it.

"This is too much, my Clarentine," cried he, "you owe me nothing, but, on the contrary, will confer a very eſſential obligation upon me by conforming to the directions I have to give you. Perhaps you wonder at the ſerioufneſs with which I have ſpoken; let me explain to you its cauſe. I am upon the point of leaving you, of leaving England, probably for a conſiderable time."—Here Clarentine ſtarted, and fixed her fine blue eyes fearfully on his face—Somerſet went on—"In my abſence many alterations may take place. You may be diſtreſt, unhappy, and have no one near you to whom you can apply for relief and aſſiſtance. Take then this pocket-book, preſerve it carefully, and before I go, I will explain myſelf more fully as to the uſe to which its contents are meant to be aſſigned."

Clarentine, deeply affected as ſhe had been before, was now quite overpowered. She ſobbed audibly as he put the pocket-book into her hand, and hiding her face,

ſunk, unable to ſpeak, upon a bench near her. Somerſet, at firſt, endeavoured to compoſe, and reſtore her to greater calmneſs; but ſoon finding the attempt vain, he ceaſed ſpeaking, and in a few minutes left her.

At breakfaſt, he publicly announced his intended departure; ſaid his ſhip was to ſail in a ſhort time, and that therefore he muſt be on board within three days at furtheſt. Lady Delmington preſſed him earneſtly to ſpend thoſe three days at her houſe; but he excuſed himſelf on account of his father, who would, he added, expect to ſee him in town before he went. "I ſhall be happy, however," continued he, "to remain here till to-morrow morning, when, by five o'clock I muſt be gone."

Lady Delmington, grateful for this ſhort delay, thanked him for granting it, and ſoon after retired with her daughters and Clarentine to their uſual morning avocations, whilſt Mrs. Harrington went out alone to walk.

Frederick during their abſence attached himſelf wholly to young Somerſet; prevailed upon him to enter into a minute detail of his way of life on board a ſhip;

aſked

aſked how long he had been in the ſervice? who was his captain? and a multitude of other queſtions, which, though wearifome to Somerſet, he good humouredly anſwered, frequently laughing at the boy's curioſity, and wondering to what it could poſſibly tend.

Meanwhile Edgar leaning back in his chair near the window, and pretending to read, neither joined in the converſation, nor appeared at all to hear it. His eyes were occaſionally glanced towards young Somerſet with an air of ſullen diſcontent, then haſtily withdrawn as if fearful of obſervation; and at laſt, ſuddenly riſing, he flung away his book, ſnatched up his hat, and abruptly quitted the room.

After dinner the whole family walked out; and Somerſet, detaching himſelf from the reſt of the party, engaged Clarentine to accompany him, and renewed the converſation of the morning.

"Since I have the pleaſure," ſaid he, "my dear Clarentine, of finding you more in a ſituation to liſten to me than when I laſt talked with you, ſuffer me now to enter upon the explanation I promiſed you. Before my return from ſea you will

be grown up, you will be of an age to expect that the tranquil and childish pleasures you have hitherto known will be changed for a life of far less serenity, nay, I fear contentment. Should any circumstances then occur to make you reasonably desirous of changing your abode, allow me to advise you in your choice of an asylum, and depend not upon your own judgment wholly in an affair of so much consequence."

Too much confounded to interrupt him, Clarentine listened with an air of profound attention, impatient for what was to follow, and scarcely comprehending what she had heard. Somerset saw her astonishment; but noticed it not, and thus proceeded.

"Far be it from me unfeelingly to alarm you with distressing predictions; and still further, by hinting to you what are my own distant apprehensions, to wish to instil into your mind a restless desire of change, or a jealous petulance and quickness in taking offence, that might involve you in apprehensions and distrust too painful to be supported by yourself, and too injurious to be forgiven by your friends.

All

All I deſign is to caution you againſt future poſſibilities; and to entreat you never to ſuffer your ſpirits to be depreſſed by imagining that, when an outcaſt from hence, you have no other eligible place of refuge."

"*An outcaſt from hence?*" repeated Clarentine, turning pale—"Good God! Mr. Somerſet, can *that* ever happen?"

"I hope" anſwered he, taking her hand, "it never *will*—yet remember, it is not impoſſible; and even againſt the moſt diſtant caſualties, as I ſaid before, it is my wiſh to warn you. The term *outcaſt* was perhaps too harſh—my Clarentine can never find hearts hard enough to treat her with ſuch undeſerved cruelty. Were Lady Delmington alone in queſtion, I would without heſitation undertake to anſwer for the continuation of her favour; but her preſent inmate, Mrs. Harrington may be leſs benevolently inclined. She is rich, and therefore will have power—is malevolent, and therefore to be dreaded."

"But why by *me?*" cried the aſtoniſhed Clarentine—"I mean not, I deſign

not to offend her; then, wherefore ſhould ſhe injure me?"

With equal pity and affection, Somerſet, when ſhe pauſed, looked at her anxious face, ſighed, and half overcome by her earneſtneſs, was almoſt tempted in anſwer to her enquiries to pronounce the name of *Edgar!* He checked himſelf however, in time, and waving the ſubject, ſaid—

"We may be interrupted; and I have yet much to ſay to you. You have probably often heard me mention a Clergyman named Lenham who was my tutor, and reſided at my father's till I determined on my preſent profeſſion. He now lives in a village near London called Hampſtead, with his wife and two young pupils who have juſt been ſent over from the Weſt Indies. When you was a child he knew and loved you moſt affectionately; and to this day enquires after you with a degree of intereſt that plainly ſhews he ſtill retains the ſame tenderneſs and regard for you. To him it is, therefore, my Clarentine, I would have you go, ſhould the face of affairs here ever take the turn I have ventured to hint to you, I thought they

they might. Lady Delmington, when conſulted, can never oppoſe it: ſhe knows too well the excellence and benevolence of his character to apprehend any thing from truſting you to his care. His heart, his houſe will be alike open to you; and be aſſured that at all times he will be equally rejoiced to afford you ſhelter, conſolation, and protection. The notes contained in the pocket-book I have left in your hands, will be of uſe in enabling you to prepare for ſuch a journey, as well as in paying whatever expences you may incur after your removal.

The two Miſs Delmingtons, at that moment, approaching and joining them, Somerſet gave a different turn to the converſation; and ſhortly after they all returned to the houſe.

The impreſſion made upon the mind of Clarentine, by the alarming cautions that had been given her, was deep and painful. Hitherto, without conſidering its ſtability, * "Content, and careleſs of to-morrow's fate," ſhe had been ſatisfied to enjoy the

* Thomſon.

advantages of her ſituation with chearfulneſs and gratitude, thoughtleſs of the future, and delighted with the preſent. Not ſuch, not equally ſerene was the picture that had now been traced to her. She diſtinguiſhed in it, as one of its moſt prominent features, the horrors of baniſhment—perhaps of total deſertion! Saw herſelf an alien without any natural friends, and aſſured ſupport! The idea, to a mind ſo tender and affectionate, was terrific! It wrung her heart with agony; and when alone, drew tears of the bittereſt anguiſh from her eyes!

"Oh! why," cried ſhe, "why did he paint to me ſo horrible a perſpective? Who, I exiled from this dear houſe? I ſeparated from Lady Delmington, from her children, from all I moſt love, moſt value upon earth? Would no one plead, no one ſupplicate for me? Could Edgar, who has ſo long called me his ſiſter, his friend, —could he endure to have his Clarentine to unkindly treated? But alas! what could Edgar do! He is too young to have any authority, any weight; and all I can expect from the oppoſition he would make, is to be ſent away in his abſence,

never

never to be heard of, never to be seen by him again?"

This reflection was so afflicting, that she scarcely knew how to support it, and almost hated Mr. Somerset for having started it to her imagination.

When she met him at supper, the redness of her eyes told the effect their late conversation had had upon her. He looked at her with the most benevolent concern, pressed her hand as she seated herself next him, and half repented the distress his well-meant caution had given her. No one else, however, appeared to notice her dejection, the settled gloom and determined silence of Edgar rendering it less conspicuous; and the kindness of Somerset successfully exerting itself to draw off the general attention to foreign subjects.

At an early hour they separated for the night—Somerset, before she went, affectionately embracing Clarentine, and recommending to her in the most earnest manner to write to him as often as it was in her power.

CHAP. VI.

IT was long before the ſpirits of Clarentine recovered their uſual tone, and an event which happened within a fortnight of young Somerſet's departure tended but the more ſeverely to aggravate their depreſſion.

Frederick Delmington, charmed with the manlineſs of character, the frankneſs of diſpoſition, ſo conſpicuous in their late gueſt, felt an invincible deſire, by embracing the ſame profeſſion, to unite his own fate to that of a man, who was ſo bright an ornament to the way of life he had choſen. Reſtleſs, enterprizing and dauntleſs, the viciſſitudes of a ſailor's career had no terrors for him, but on the contrary, ſeemed to promiſe far greater happineſs than the ſedentary occupations of a ſcholar, or the inglorious drudgery of a man of buſineſs.

After a ſhort deliberation he made known his purpoſe to his mother, beſought her

her acquieſcence to it, and proteſted that to no other would he now, or ever ſubſcribe. Lady Delmington, equally ſurprized and diſpleaſed at his reſolute tone, and firmly perſuaded this new paſſion was but the boyiſh whim of a moment, coldly, but ſteadily anſwered, ſhe had other views for him, and conſequently requeſted him to mention his own no more.

Frederick ſcrupulouſly obeyed this laſt injunction, and was ſilent—but not therefore diſcomfited. Oppoſition ſeemed but the more to ſtimulate his purpoſe, and from that hour his imagination was wholly buſied in finding means to facilitate its ſucceſs.

One morning, about a week after, he was miſſed at the uſual hour of breakfaſt, and though the moſt diſtant ſuſpicion of the truth never occurred, diligently, yet vainly ſought throughout the whole houſe. Lady Delmington concluding he was gone upon ſome wild expedition to Lyſton, ſoon calmed her mind about him, and gave up all expectation of his return till dinner.

Dinner,

Dinner, however, came—in ſhort, the entire day paſſed, and ſtill he did not appear. His mother, almoſt diſtracted by her apprehenſions, diſpatched all the ſervants different ways in purſuit of him. Edgar likewiſe aſſiſted in the ſearch; his ſiſters weeping bitterly, terrified each other with the moſt dreadful conjectures, and the whole houſe was thrown into alarm and confuſion; not a creature in it, Emma excepted, chuſing to go to bed, even for an inſtant, during the night!

Had Lady Delmington been in a ſtate of mind tranquil enough to have attended to her, the remarks, and unfeeling ſarcaſms of Mrs. Harrington on this occaſion had alone been ſufficient to have deſtroyed her. With the moſt inveterate malignity ſhe was perpetually talking of the conſequences to be inevitably expected from the unlimited indulgence of parents to their children—of the weakneſs of ſuppoſing that where all command was reſigned, authority could be maintained, and of the folly of grieving at that which a little firmneſs, and better regulations might have totally prevented.

Once in the midſt of theſe cruel obſervations, Lady Delmington gained ſpirit to interrupt her—

"Oh! Madam," cried ſhe "you never were a mother, elſe you could not, at a time like this, have the courage, the inhumanity, let me rather call it, to wring a mother's heart by ſuch reproaches!"

"Well, well," ſaid Mrs. Harrington, "go on as you have begun, continue this abſurd forbearance, and depend upon it what you now ſuffer will be but the commencement of far heavier afflictions. I forſee much miſchief from your blind partiality to that inſinuating little ſerpent Clarentine."

Lady Delmington looked offended and amazed.

"She is preparing eternal regret for you;" continued Mrs. Harrington,— "worming herſelf into the confidence of your whole family; artfully gaining ground in your hearts; and ſooner or later will end, by undermining your peace, and blaſting your faireſt hopes!"

"Who? Clarentine?" cried the indignant Lady Delmington, "our guileleſs and

and innocent Clarentine? How? by what means?

"By enſlaving the affections of your ſon," abruptly anſwered Mrs. Harrington, "by exciting and nouriſhing in his breaſt a degrading paſſion, cauſed by your own imprudence, confirmed by habit, and rendered unconquerable by her ſeductive wiles!"

"Impoſſible!" exclaimed Lady Delmington, "Clarentine is a mere child, as void of deceit, as ingenuous and artleſs as a new born infant! She cannot at her age have formed ſo deep-laid a plan; cannot be capable of *ſeducing* any human being!"

The entrance of one of Lady Delmington's unſucceſsful meſſengers here put an end to the converſation. She could liſten to no more, her agony was unſpeakable, and ſhe haſtily left the room.

The morning came, and brought with it no conſolation—no intelligence; but ſaw the unhappy family in encreaſed affliction—pale, harraſſed, and hopeleſs, ſeated round Lady Delmington, and fearfully liſtening to every ſound—ſtarting at every whiſper!

On

On the evening of the ſecond day of this terrifying ſuſpenſe, it occurred to the wretched mother for the firſt time, that her ſon was perhaps gone to join young Somerſet. She remembered his earneſt petition to her on that ſubject; and was yet more confirmed in her ſuſpicions by the account Edgar gave of the converſation Frederick had held with Somerſet the day before his departure. This idea was joy, compared to the horrible uncertainty ſhe had hitherto endured; and ſhe inſtantly determined to write to Mr. Somerſet for confirmation of its truth.

Clarentine, who was preſent whilſt this ſubject was debated, immediately on hearing her aunt's reſolution, drew from her pocket-book young Somerſet's addreſs.

"There, my dear Madam," ſaid ſhe, preſenting it to Lady Delmington, "there is Mr. Somerſet's direction. He left it with me, that whilſt he remained in port, I might write to him as often as I choſe."

"I am glad to find," ſaid Lady Delmington, "he propoſed ſuch a correſpondence; it proves his regard for you, my Clarentine, and you cannot too ſeduloufly cultivate his favour. Do not you think

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think with me, Edgar," added ſhe, turning to her ſon who was ſtanding at the window, "it is fortunate for her to have acquired in ſo near a relation, ſo partial a friend?"

Edgar changed colour—was ſilent a moment, and then in a heſitating voice, anſwered—

"Yes, certainly, I believe ſo."

"You believe ſo!" repeated his mother. "My dear boy, did you hear what I ſaid?"

"Edgar hears nothing that is ſaid to him now;" cried Clarentine, "he ſcarcely anſwers any body."

"*You* have no reaſon to complain," cried Edgar, reddening—"I have ſpoken to you of late, quite as often as you have to *me*."

Then flinging open a glaſs door that led from the parlour into the garden, he angrily left the room.

Lady Delmington, ſurpriſed at the unuſual acrimony ſhewn upon this occaſion by her ſon, now raiſed her eyes towards Clarentine, and ſaw, with encreaſed aſtoniſhment, that her's were filled with tears!

"What

"What am I to believe from all this?" cried ſhe, with ſome ſeverity—Have you, Clarentine, and Edgar been quarrelling?"

"Indeed, Madam," anſwered Clarentine, "we have *not*; it is true Edgar, for ſome time paſt, has appeared to ſhun me; nay, he has even appeared deſirous to avoid every opportunity of ſpeaking to me; but *why* he ſhould, or *how* I have offended him, believe me, deareſt Madam, I know no more than yourſelf."

"And how long," ſaid Lady Delmington, "has this ſhyneſs on his part ſubſiſted?"

"Ever ſince the night of our ball," anſwered Clarentine. "I wiſh, deareſt Madam, you would ſpeak to him upon the ſubject; perhaps he would explain himſelf to *you*, though he diſdains doing it to *me*."

"Well," ſaid Lady Delmington, "do not make yourſelf uneaſy, my Clarentine, I *will* ſpeak to him upon the ſubject, ſince between brothers and ſiſters (and you ought always to conſider each other in that light) ſuch cauſeleſs reſerve and unkindneſs ſhould never, for a moment, take place."

Clarentine thanked her, and ſoon after retired; whilſt Lady Delmington, but too apprehenſive of the juſtice of Mrs. Harrington's ſuſpicions, with regard to her ſon, ſent immediately for him, in order to begin her interrogation.

With an air of mixed ſullenneſs and melancholy, he obeyed the ſummons. His mother, ſtruck with ſecret dread, had ſcarcely preſence of mind ſufficient to diſguiſe her alarm—he obſerved it not, however, and ſhe thus began—

"What is the matter, my dear Edgar? Why are you ſo thoughtful and grave?"

Edgar endeavoured to aſſume a more unconcerned look; and anſwered with affected careleſſneſs, he did not know.

"You are a ſilly boy," reſumed Lady Delmington, "to excite ſo much uneaſineſs in poor little Clarentine for nothing. She thinks you are ſeriouſly offended with her, yet feels perfectly unconſcious of ever having given you cauſe. I am ſure you have too much good ſenſe to be capable of diſtreſſing her long by ſuch conduct. What has ſhe done? tell me, my ſon, and I will try to bring you to an accommodation. It is beneath your age

to

to keep up any thing like an abſolute quarrel with her—remember, Edgar, you are ſixteen, and ſhe is ſtill a mere child."

During this ſpeech, Edgar's countenance underwent a variety of changes, and when his mother pauſed, he haſtily and with much emotion ſaid—

"Clarentine cannot be called ſuch an abſolute *child*, I think, with any juſtice; ſhe is only three years younger than I am."

"It is very little to the purpoſe," cried Lady Delmington, "whether in *your* opinion Clarentine is a child or not; by all reaſonable people ſhe will yet be long conſidered as ſuch; though I own, in the preſent inſtance, ſhe has ſhewn far more underſtanding than you have done, and therefore leſs deſerves to be treated like one."

"I don't perceive the good ſenſe, however," cried Edgar, with a forced ſmile, "of complaining to you of what paſſes between ourſelves."

"You muſt allow for her age," again reſumed Lady Delmington; "ſhe meant no harm, but merely ſpoke to me with a view

view of learning, through my mediation, how ſhe might beſt appeaſe you."

"Appeaſe me!" repeated Edgar in a ſoftened voice, "what a word! I have not had any diſpute with her--have not *told* her I was angry—then how came ſhe ever to imagine I was ſo?"

"Perhaps," ſaid Lady Delmington, ſmiling, "if you had had a literal quarrel with her, ſhe might have been leſs hurt, ſince one of her chief complaints is, that you never ſpeak to her."

Edgar could not bear an imputation like this. His own pride was wounded in that of Clarentine, and colouring deeply he replied—

"Good God! Madam—you ſpeak of her, as if ſhe was an *idiot*, as well as a *child*."

"Indeed Edgar," cried Lady Delmington, "you miſtake me—I think for her time of life ſhe is as ſenſible as one can reaſonably expect: all I wiſh is, to perſuade you to make proper allowances for her age, and to treat her with leſs neglect, leſt ſhe ſhould be led by your coldneſs and diſregard to imagine you diſdain

diſdain her for her povety, and wiſh to give her a diſguſt to this houſe."

"Who *I*?" cried Edgar, with a look that proved how diſtant from his heart was ſuch a thought, "*I* diſdain her? *I* wiſh to give her a diſguſt to this houſe? Ah! I know not whether I ſhould not conceive a laſting one to it myſelf, were ſhe ever to quit it!"

Lady Delmington, diſmayed at the unreſtrained warmth with which this was uttered, could with difficulty diſſemble her diſpleaſure. She ſat ſome time meditating upon what ſhe had heard; and at length, with as much calmneſs as ſhe could command, ſaid—

"At preſent I ſee no probability of her being ſeparated from us; yet I am by no means certain I ſhall always have it in my power to retain her with me. It will give me great concern to part with her, let the day be as diſtant as it may; but ſtill, ſhould any eligible ſituation offer for her when ſhe is a little older, I ſhould think myſelf her enemy not to accept it."

Edgar petrified by the whole tenor of this ſpeech—a ſpeech ſo cold, ſo unlike every other his mother had ever uttered concerning

concerning Clarentine, felt himſelf for a moment deprived of all power to anſwer it. Soon, however, recovering (his apprehenſions for Clarentine made him bold) with reſpect, yet with firmneſs and courage, he ſaid—

"It appears ſo evident, that no ſituation *can* be eligible for her that removes her from beneath your roof, that I am far from believing it poſſible you ſhould ever place her under any other; the orphan daughter of my father's only brother muſt always be ſecure of an aſylum with his children; they are bound, in honour to his memory, for ever to protect and cheriſh her."

"They are ſo, Edgar," replied his mother, "as long as that daughter *requires* ſuch protection; but Clarentine is not now ſo wholly deſtitute of other friends as ſhe was at her father's death. William Somerſet," added ſhe, ſtedfaſtly regarding her ſon whilſt ſhe ſpoke, "ſeems not only willing, but anxious to ſerve her. He loves her affectionately—will have much at his diſpoſal—is generous and friendly, and therefore it would certainly be injuring

juring her very eſſentially to oppoſe any plan he might propoſe for her advantage."

Edgar caſting down his eyes, and at once loſing all that ſteadineſs of look and voice he had juſt before aſſumed, ſighed deeply, and anſwered—

"If Clarentine prefers Mr. Somerſet's protection, values more highly his friendſhip than ours, it would, I allow, be cruel to withhold her from it. I could not, however, have imagined that ſhe would ſo eaſily have learnt to forget us. She has (comparatively, at leaſt) known this Somerſet ſo ſhort a time—has hitherto appeared to love us all ſo much!"

"Your ſurpriſe at this ſudden attachment," ſaid Lady Delmington, "would ceaſe, my ſon, were you to conſider the extreme verſatility of children's diſpoſitions; whoever laſt ſhews them moſt kindneſs; whoever, by greater attention than uſual, flatters their little vanity, is ſure of becoming an excluſive favourite. Clarentine is tender and open-hearted—ſuſceptible of the ſincereſt gratitude, gentle, ſenſible, and good; but Clarentine is no prodigy. She has her failings as well as other folks of her age, and perhaps at this mo-

ment prefers young Somerſet to every other friend; it is very probable, however, that in another fortnight ſhe may forget him, and attach herſelf again to us."

Then riſing to leave the room, Lady Delmington ſaid ſhe had letters to write, and begged not to be diſturbed till ſupper.

The cruel policy of his mother's artful inſinuations left on the mind of Edgar a depreſſion he knew not how to conquer. All ſhe had ſaid at the beginning of their converſation had but ſlightly affected him, compared to the real miſery its concluſion had inflicted: Clarentine void of natural affection, wavering, unſteady, capricious in her attachments! Clarentine capable for a moment of forgetting a family ſhe had ſo long reſided with, of preferring to that family a man, whom ſo many years abſence had rendered almoſt a ſtranger to her!—Oh! there was ſomething in the idea ſo oppreſſive to his heart, that, for a time, it drove all other reflections from his mind, and filled him with the deepeſt ſadneſs and regret! Pride, jealouſy, and reſentment, however, ſoon came to his relief,

lief, and gave him ſtrength to conceal his inward ſufferings, and to determine, during the remainder of his ſtay at home, ſedulouſly to avoid her.

Clarentine, hoping much from the interference of Lady Delmington, was moſt grievouſly diſappointed when ſhe obſerved the encreaſed coldneſs and neglect with which Edgar treated her after their conference—aſcribing a part of his taciturnity and gloom, however, to his anxiety reſpecting Frederick, ſhe forbore uttering any complaint, or ſeeking any explanation, quietly waiting till he ſhould himſelf ſolicit one.

But Edgar was too indignant even to wiſh for any; and ſoon convinced her that, whatever might be his uneaſineſs concerning his brother, it was but the ſecondary cauſe of the change ſhe ſo much lamented. The words of young Somerſet on this painful diſcovery again occurred to her. "If this indifference in Edgar," cried ſhe, "ſhould prove but the beginning of that general deſertion he taught me to expect—if the loſs of his affection ſhould be but the forerunner of my total renunciation by the

reſt of his family! What is to become of me? How am I to ſupport their unkindneſs? How have I deſerved it? Oh! preſerve me, heaven! from ever living to ſee the day which is to alienate me ſo cruelly from the hearts of thoſe, whoſe happineſs I would purchaſe at the price of my own!"

CHAP. VII.

FREDERICK had been gone a week, when Lady Delmington received the following letter from young Somerſet in anſwer to the enquiries ſhe had made relating to her ſon:—

TO LADY DELMINGTON.

DEAR MADAM,

"I am deeply concerned that my late viſit at your houſe ſhould have been productive of ſo much diſtreſs and alarm to your whole family; need I add how much pleaſure it would give me were I able to

ſend

ſend you any certain intelligence of your young fugitive? Hitherto I have had it in my power to obtain no ſatisfactory information concerning him; yet I have great hopes of ſoon being more ſucceſsful. The laſt time I went on ſhore, that is to ſay, yeſterday morning, I was told I had been enquired for repeatedly by a young ſailor, who had ſince had a private conference with our Captain; no one, however, could inform me where he lodged, or what was his name; but by the deſcription given me of his perſon, I could have no doubt of its being your ſon.

"In the evening, when I again went on board, I requeſted the Captain to tell me who the youth was, he had diſcourſed with the preceding day, and what his reaſons were for enquiring ſo anxiouſly after me. He anſwered that he knew nothing more of him than what his appearance denoted, which was that of a young adventurer recently eloped from his friends; that all his buſineſs with him was to requeſt he might be taken on board our veſſel in any capacity whatever. 'The boy,' continued he, 'looks active and ſpirited, and I own I felt ſtrongly tempted to ſecure

him; but not knowing what anxiety I might occaſion to his family by ſuch a ſtep, I ſimply told him I ſhould let him know my determination in a few days; but at that moment could give him no poſitive anſwer.'

"I then aſked where this interview had taken place, and where they were to meet again? He named one of the principal inns on ſhore, and thither, at the appointed time, I am to carry the Captain's anſwer.

"If the youth in queſtion, Madam, ſhould prove to be your ſon, you may depend upon my exerting all my influence over him in order to induce him to return to you immediately. I will write again the moment I have ſeen him, to acquaint you with my ſucceſs.

"I beg to be remembered to Sir Edgar, and the young ladies; and with kindeſt love to Clarentine, remain,

"Dear Madam,

"With great reſpect and regard,

"Your Ladyſhip's moſt obedient,

"Humble Servant,

"WILLIAM SOMERSET."

After

After reading this letter, it ſeemed ſo evident to Lady Delmington that any farther oppoſition to her ſon's wiſhes would but drive him to extremities, and induce him at any riſk to engage with ſome other Captain leſs ſcrupulous than Somerſet's, that ſhe inſtantly determined to write again to the latter, granting Frederick full permiſſion to go on board, recommending him to his care, and entreating him to become her agent, and provide for her ſon every thing neceſſary for the voyage.

Clarentine wrote a ſhort letter to Somerſet at the ſame time, and both were immediately ſent off.

By return of poſt, Somerſet's anſwer arrived:—

TO LADY DELMINGTON.

DEAR MADAM,

"The receipt of your Ladyſhip's laſt letter gave me inexpreſſible ſatisfaction. I had ſeen your ſon in the morning, and had ineffectually attempted to reaſon him from his purpoſed enterprize; he was immovable in adhering to it, aſſured me, that if I oppoſed his admiſſion into my own ſhip, he would apply to the officers

of ſome other; and, in ſhort, was unalterably determined, neither to return home nor abandon his original deſign. We parted, in conſequence of this unavailing contention, mutually diſcontented with each other; but with a promiſe, however, of meeting again the next day.

"Your Ladyſhip will be curious to learn how, during all the time that preceded his admiſſion on board, he contrived to ſupport himſelf to procure a lodging, and other neceſſaries. The following is the account I gathered from him upon the ſubject.

"When he left Delmington Houſe, which he ſays was at four o'clock in the morning, he carried with him *half-a-crown* in his purſe, two ſhirts in his pocket, a gold watch, and a pair of ſilver buckles; the watch he ſold as well as the buckles, on the ſecond day of his elopement; and, for *both*, got only five guineas. 'I knew,' ſaid he, 'the rogues cheated me, for I had often heard my mother ſay the watch, which was the gift of my god-father, was *alone* worth four times that ſum: what could I do however? I wanted the money, and they ſoon diſcovered it; ſo, for fear

fear they ſhould make a ſtill better bargain with me, and offer me yet leſs, I was glad to let both watch and buckles go for what they firſt offered.'

" On his arrival at the port we are now anchored at, he immediately changed his coat and waiſtcoat for a common ſea-boy's jacket and trowſers. The money he brought with him has laſted ever ſince; though, I believe by this time, it is very nearly exhauſted.

" The intelligence your Ladyſhip's ſecond letter enabled me to communicate to him, when next we met, filled him with the moſt extravagant delight. He was received the ſame evening on board, and is, at this moment, writing to his brother at my ſide.

" Your Ladyſhip may be perfectly aſſured, that I ſhall neglect no means in my power to render the voyage eaſy and comfortable to him; I entreat you therefore to diſcard all anxiety on his account, and to believe that the ſame attention I ſhould pay to a brother of my own, I ſhall always be happy to ſhew him. We ſhall equip him immediately with whatever the Captain may think neceſſary; and are,

to a man, extremely rejoiced to have gained ſo ſpirited and chearful a companion.

" I have the honour to be,
" Your Ladyſhip's moſt obliged,
" And very humble Servant,
" WILLIAM SOMERSET."

Encloſed was a letter—

TO SIR EDGAR DELMINGTON, BART.

DEAR EDGAR,

" I dare not write to my mother, though I long to do it too, to thank her for what Mr. Somerſet tells me ſhe ſays about me in her laſt letter to him. I ſuppoſe you were all famouſly aſtoniſhed when you firſt diſcovered I was gone? What did our friend *Crab* ſay upon the ſubject? I hope ſhe was in a glorious rage! I am ſorry I had not time before I went to give her ſome little amicable token of remembrance!

" Love to Clarentine and my ſiſters. Take care of our poney, and believe me, dear Edgar,

" Your affectionate brother,
" FREDERICK DELMINGTON."

" P. S.

"P. S.—Mr. Somerſet is very kind to me—I knew he would. Our Captain is a good ſort of a man enough."

This curious epiſtle, all fears for the ſafety of the writer being at an end, amuſed the little family extremely. Edgar immediately anſwered it, and Harriet and Sophia each wrote a few words in the cover. Lady Delmington the ſame day ſent off a letter filled with the moſt grateful acknowledgments to young Somerſet, entreating him to tranſmit to her an exact account of all the expences that would be incurred for her ſon, and to let her hear from him as often as poſſible.

The time was now drawing near for Edgar's departure. Mrs. Harrington was to ſet off the ſame morning, and might in ſome meaſure be ſaid, by the joy her removal occaſioned, to allay the concern felt by the whole family on account of the loſs of Edgar.

The day before he ſet out, Clarentine, of late unuſually grave and melancholy, felt ſtill more than ever depreſſed. He had ſcarcely ſpoken to her, with any de-

gree of cordiality, for near a month; and the idea of his leaving home in ſuch a temper of mind, diſtreſſed her beyond meaſure. Determined, however, not to make the firſt advances, ſhe ſmothered her concern, and ſtruggled to appear eaſy and contented.

After ſupper, and when the whole family had left the parlour, Clarentine, while ſhe was undreſſing Emma, who, that night, on account of her brother's departure, had been allowed to ſit up an hour or two later than uſual, recollected a bird ſhe had left hanging out in his cage, at the ſchool-room window, and as ſoon as the child was in bed, haſtened thither to take it in.

On opening the door her candle blew out, and ſhe expected to have been left in total darkneſs; but what was her ſurpriſe to find Edgar there before her, with a light he had himſelf brought ſtanding near a deſk arranging ſome papers!

They both ſtarted on perceiving each other; and Clarentine, forgetting her errand, was, for a moment, tempted to turn back; Edgar, however, prevented her, and by aſking her in a more friendly accent

cent than ſhe expected, what ſhe came for? brought her to her recollection, and determined her to proceed.

She accordingly went towards the caſement, opened it, took in the cage, and after hanging it up in its uſual place was leaving the room in utter ſilence, when Edgar again ſtopped her—

"Won't you light your candle, Clarentine," ſaid he, "before you go?"

Clarentine turned back, and he brought the light towards her—they then, for the firſt time looked in each other's faces, and Edgar ſaw that her's was bathed in tears!

All the tendereſt emotions of his heart were awakened at this ſight; he took her paſſive hand, and drawing her gently towards him, ſaid in a voice that was kindneſs itſelf—

"Why, my Clarentine, are we no longer the friends we uſed to be? Why were we going to part with ſo much coldneſs?"

"Alas!" cried Clarentine, "I ought to aſk that of *you*, Edgar!"

"Well," cried he, taking the candle from her, "come back, and let us have a few minutes converſation."

As

As he ſpoke, he led her towards the table, and they both ſat down.

The explanation ſo long, and ſo vainly deſired by Clarentine, then took place. Edgar communicated to her his fears reſpecting Frederick Somerſet, reminded her of the firmneſs with which on the night of the ball ſhe had refuſed to come down till Somerſet interfered; aſked her how ſhe could, after engaging herſelf to dance with *him*, ſtand up with another the whole evening? and, in ſhort, recapitulated frankly and honeſtly every circumſtance that had given him alarm, and beſought her, if ſhe could, at once to exculpate herſelf.

Clarentine flattered herſelf this would be no difficult taſk. Her heart was ſo pure, her intentions ſo innocent; ſhe was ſo remote from any wiſh of concealment, or any ſuſpicion of the real nature of Edgar's jealouſy, that, joy to find his late coldneſs originated not from more ſerious cauſes obliterated the remembrance of all his paſt injuſtice.

"My dear Edgar," cried ſhe, "you little know my heart, if you imagine, that when I appeared to give way to Mr. Somerſet's

merſet's ſolicitations with greater readineſs than I did to your's, I meant to ſhew him any marked preference, or regard. I conſider you *both* as my brothers, my beſt friends; but to him, as being my *eldeſt* brother—as being totally beyond the reach of Mrs. Harrington's ill-humour, I more quietly ſubmitted, becauſe I foreſaw leſs reaſon to ſuppoſe he could be reproached for the kindneſs he ſhewed me. Never, therefore, again, dear Edgar, reſent the ſiſterly affection I feel ſo much pleaſure in letting Mr. Somerſet perceive I have for him. He has merited it by ſo many acts of friendſhip, by ſo much benevolence and goodneſs, that I ſhould hate *myſelf*, and by no means have a better opinion of *you*, if you could ſtill love me, were I not at all times, and upon all occaſions, to treat him with the attention and gratitude that are his due."

Edgar, incapable of defining the mixed ſenſation of approbation and envy, excited by this ſpeech, aſhamed to ſuffer the latter to appear, and yet too cruelly oppreſſed to be capable of giving utterance to the former, hung his head in ſilent dejection, aſſented tacitly to the hope ſhe expreſſed

that

that they were now perfectly reconciled; and the next moment ſuffered her, after bidding him good-night, with all her wonted cordiality, to quit the room, without attempting to detain her.

The next morning, at ſix o'clock, he ſet off, leaving Clarentine, guiltleſs of a thought to his diſadvantage, firmly perſuaded ſhe had ſucceeded in eradicating from his breaſt every ſhadow of animoſity, and conſequently diſpoſed again to be the gayeſt and happieſt creature in the houſe.

Lady Delmington, ignorant of the cauſe of this ſudden alteration, attributed it ſolely to the departure of Edgar, and fondly flattered herſelf his late coldneſs to her had effectually damped an attachment ſhe had begun to obſerve with ſo much diſtruſt. Pleaſed with this idea, though by no means deſirous their mutual indifference ſhould amount to abſolute diſlike, ſhe redoubled all her kindneſs to Clarentine in ſecret atonement for the wrong ſhe had done her, in ſeeking to alienate from her the heart of her ſon.

Mrs. Harrington rejoicing that, at leaſt for the preſent, all danger was precluded by the temporary ſeparation of the ſuſpect-

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ed lovers, left Delmington Houſe in a far more tranquil ſtate of mind than ſhe had enjoyed during her whole viſit. The family ſaw her depart with pleaſure, and all reſumed its former ſerenity and calmneſs.

CHAP. VIII.

NEAR two years had elapſed, unmarked by any ſtriking incident, and undiſturbed by any domeſtic evil. Lady Delmington reſigned to the deprivation of her youngeſt ſon, felt all her tenderneſs encreaſed for the eldeſt, whoſe early talents, and many excellencies of heart and underſtanding, ſeemed to juſtify her utmoſt partiality, and to promiſe the fulleſt realization of her moſt ſanguine hopes.

The diſſention, however, ſhe had ſucceeded for a time in exciting between him and Clarentine he had never forgotten, and quick-ſighted as to her real motives, had likewiſe learned, but too well, to underſtand. He perceived clearly what were her

her fears, and conſcious of their juſtice, ſought by every method in his power to check their progreſs, and miſlead her penetration.

Whenever, in her preſence, therefore Clarentine and he were together, he compelled himſelf to treat her with as much neglect, as when they were alone he evinced attention and kindneſs; ſeldom ſpoke to her; never, when ſhe was abſent, ſpoke of her; and ſo completely lulled his mother's apprehenſions, that ſhe almoſt began to wonder how ſhe could ever entertain any.

Clarentine, inexperienced and artleſs, was long before ſhe obſerved, and when ſhe did obſerve, utterly incapable of comprehending the reaſons of theſe ſudden viciſſitudes of temper. One hour all warmth, all animation, he converſed with an eaſe, a gaiety that delighted her; the next, if his mother appeared, he became negligent and careleſs, abſent when ſpoken to, guarded in his looks, grave, reſerved, and ſpiritleſs.

Struck at length, by the ſingularity of this behaviour, Clarentine one day, half laughing,

laughing, queſtioned him upon the ſubject.

"Are you not," cried ſhe, "the moſt capricious of human beings, Edgar?—You are never the ſame two hours together, but in the midſt of the moſt chearful converſation often aſſume, from one minute to another, the moſt diſtant and aſtoniſhing ſolemnity I ever beheld. What can be the reaſon?"

"My deareſt Clarentine," anſwered he, "I do not at preſent *wiſh* you to underſtand the motives of my conduct, innocent and juſtifiable as they are. This, however, I am anxious you ſhould believe; that I am influenced in what I do neither by *caprice* nor chance, but by reaſons the moſt indiſpenſible. Aſk me for no further explanation; but truſt to the purity of my intentions, and communicate your ſurprize upon this ſubject to no one elſe."

Towards the latter end of the autumn Frederick returned to England, and with his friend Somerſet, haſtened to Delmington Houſe. Their arrival was hailed as a ſignal for feſtivity throughout every part of the family; a ball was given on the

the occaſion; a quantity of beer diſtributed among the ſervants and neighbouring peaſantry; and to compleat the general ſatisfaction, *three entire holydays* granted the children, during which no maſters came, no leſſons were given, no taſks impoſed!

By indulgencies ſuch as theſe, by a reception the moſt tender and affectionate, and by every amuſement it was in her power to procure him, Lady Delmington flattered herſelf ſhe ſhould wean the heart of her ſon from a profeſſion he had, ſo infinitely againſt her choice, embraced —attach him once again to his native home, and inſpire him with a laſting diſlike to his late way of life. But this ſhe ſoon found it was hopeleſs to expect. The firſt three or four days of his return elapſed—the firſt tranſports excited by the ſight of his family abated, he became reſtleſs, diſcontented and impatient; made eternal compariſons between the languid uniformity of his preſent ſituation, and the ſpirit, buſtle, and animation that reigned on board a man of war; proteſted he knew not how to employ a ſingle hour of his time; hated the *dead-calm* of every thing

thing around him; and longed for nothing ſo much as to be reſtored to his ſhip, his meſs-mates, and his *forecaſtle jokes*.

Far different were the ſentiments of young Somerſet. Though partial to his profeſſion, becauſe well verſed in its duties and perſuaded of its utility, though full of courage, jealous of the honour of his country, and zealous in its defence in time of actual ſervice, he was yet not ſo wholly bigotted to the charms of a ſailor's life as to be inſenſible to the pleaſure of a temporary change, or incapable of enjoying the elegancies of poliſhed ſociety. Naturally fond of literature, and guided in his choice of books by taſte and diſcernment, he loved ſtudy, and was indefatigable in the ſearch of knowledge. Whoever would join with him in this purſuit, he ſought after, and courted; delighted in ſocial converſation; and never experienced ſuch perfect ſatisfaction, as when reading ſome intereſting work, by the fire-ſide on a winter evening, with a chearful family circle around him. The ſecurity he then enjoyed recompenſed him "for the dangers he had paſſed;"

and as the loud blaſts howled without the houſe and he

" Sat at the ſocial fire, and happy heard
" The excluded tempeſt idly rave along."*

he hugged himſelf in his preſent ſafety; and grieved for all, who were expoſed to their fury.

At the end of a fortnight, to the deep regret of Frederick, and the general concern of the whole family, he was ſummoned to town by his father, and obliged to terminate his viſit. He took an opportunity, however, before he went, of privately interrogating Clarentine.

" Have you," ſaid he, " as much reaſon to be ſatisfied with your ſituation as when I was here laſt? Does Lady Delmington ſtill continue kind to you? Are her children affectionate? Tell me, my Clarentine; and be not afraid to own to me the truth."

" Indeed" ſaid Clarentine, " I have no cauſe, ſince I can but repeat what I have already told you; that I am perfectly happy; truly grateful, and deſirous of nothing ſo much as to remain always as I am."

Then requeſting him to wait for her a moment, ſhe went up to her room, and

* Thompſon.

brought

brought down the pocket-book, he had two years before given her—

"There," cried ſhe, preſenting it to him, "take that back, Mr. Somerſet; I know not exactly its contents, for I never could bring myſelf, recollecting for what purpoſe it was beſtowed, to look at it without ſhuddering; but that it is of value I have no doubt. Be that as it will, however, I entreat you will take it back. It would be unpardonable in me to retain it now, convinced as I am, I never ſhall have occaſion to put it to the uſe intended. I truſt implicitly in Lady Delmington's affection, and think I ſhould be a hateful wretch ſecretly to hoard with ſuſpicious ingratitude the means of quitting her, at the very time ſhe is moſt generouſly loading me with favours, and ſupporting me by her bounty.

"Dear, and amiable girl!" cried Somerſet, ſtruck with admiration at this diſintereſted ſpeech—"ſuch perfect confidence in Lady Delmington does honour to your excellent heart, and will, I hope, be nobly rewarded! Still, however, retain the pocket-book, if not for the uſe originally

originally deſigned, at leaſt, for any other you may like to put it to."

They then ſeparated, and the following day Somerſet went up to London.

CHAP. IX.

SOME weeks after, Lady Delmington received a very extraordinary viſit from a near neighbour of hers, the Earl of Welwyn, a man of the moſt reſpectable character, but of a retired, ſhy diſpoſition, who, though he had been ſettled ſome years in the country, had ſcarcely viſited any other family, or admitted any other gueſts than herſelf and her children.

He brought with him his daughter, Lady Julia Leyburne, a very pretty, delicate girl, not yet fifteen. When the firſt compliments were over, and they had taken their ſeats, he made known the purport of his viſit.

He had a ſon, he ſaid, who was then at Oxford, in a very declining ſtate of health,

health, owing it was apprehended to the wonderful rapidity of his growth, united to a delicacy of conſtitution, that rendered it adviſeable, according to the opinion of the beſt phyſicians, to ſend him, as the winter was approaching, to a warmer climate. Unwilling, at ſo early an age, to commit him wholly to his own guidance, and not poſſeſſing any connections abroad to whom he could, with implicit confidence, entruſt him, his Lordſhip added, that he was determined to accompany him to Liſbon in perſon.

"Now, Madam," continued he, with a good-humoured ſmile, "while I am performing my duty towards *one* of my children, I leave *another*, who is equally dear to me, unprotected, helpleſs, and inexperienced. She has no mother, no female relations whoſe habits and way of life I yet wiſh her to be inured to, no governeſs I can wholly confide in, but ſtands there, a poor deſerted little being, dependant upon *your* benevolence for that care and attention, her age ſtill demands."

Lady Delmington looked extremely ſurprized; his Lordſhip however, without giving her time to ſpeak, went on—

"I have witneſſed the effects, and long ſecretly applauded the excellence, of your maternal character. As a wife your conduct was exemplary—as a mother it exceeds all praiſe. Now whether my admiration will appear to your Ladyſhip of any value, when you hear to how bold a requeſt it prompts me, is yet to be determined; a higher proof of its ſincerity, however, I could not give, and my motive will at all events, with ſo good a mother, plead my excuſe. Your children," continued he, "the moſt lovely, the moſt promiſing I ever beheld; your wiſe ſyſtem of domeſtic education; your retired manner of living, all conſpire to excite in me the moſt ardent deſire, during my uncertain abſence, to intrude my daughter into your family. Could you, Lady Delmington, to oblige an anxious father, could you generouſly undertake ſuch a charge? Could you, relieving me from the painful neceſſity of placing her in a ſchool, burden yourſelf with ſuch an incumbrance a few ſhort months? She is mild, docile, and tractable; has been uſed to proper controul; is of a very affectionate nature, and would ſoon learn to love you as her mother,

your

your children as her ſiſters. What they are taught, I would wiſh the ſame maſters to continue teaching her; what rules they are preſcribed, I would wiſh her to follow. Their *ſchool hours*, their *morning taſks*, let her conform to them all. Make her in every reſpect your own child, and treat her, while ſhe merits it, with the ſame tenderneſs a mother feels. Here ſhe ſtands, look at her well, and let her youth, her innocence, plead for her."

Lady Delmington, won by the characteriſtic frankneſs, the paternal ſolicitude of this ſpeech, found all her riſing objections give way to its blunt, but affecting earneſtneſs. She roſe up, and ringing the bell, ſaid, "Let me at once, my Lord, put an end to your anxiety on this ſubject, by aſſuring you that, feeling myſelf highly honoured by ſo diſtinguiſhed a mark of your good opinion, I moſt readily accept the precious truſt you conſign to me, and from this moment look upon your daughter as my eſtabliſhed inmate."

"Heaven bleſs you! dear Madam," cried the enraptured father, ſeizing her hand, "you have given me new life, given me happineſs unſpeakable! Julia," con-

tinued he, turning to his daughter, "approach and thank your benevolent protectreſs."

The lovely girl timidly advanced, and ſtammered out her grateful acknowledgements; whilſt Lady Delmington, affectionately embracing her, ordered the ſervant who now entered to call her children.

In a few moments the door opened, and the Miſs Delmingtons, Clarentine, and Frederick, whom curioſity brought with them, entered the room.

Lord Welwyn, taking his daughter by the hand, led her towards them—

"I have brought you," ſaid he "my dear young ladies, a new ſiſter, a playmate, whom I hope you will love as much as ſhe is already diſpoſed to love you. Your excellent mother has conſented to her admiſſion, and in a few days I ſhall leave her, fearleſs and happy, among you."

The girls, enchanted by this ſpeech, all gathered round their promiſed companion, with looks of mixed pleaſure and ſurprize; and whilſt each attempted to expreſs in her own way the ſatisfaction that ſhe

ſhe felt, Lady Delmington turned to Lord Welwyn, and ſaid,

"When may we flatter ourſelves, my Lord, you will permit your daughter to come to us?"

"I cannot part with her" anſwered he, "till I ſet out for Oxford, to join my ſon, which will not be till towards the end of the week."

"On Friday, or Saturday next, then," ſaid Lady Delmington, "we may expect her?"

The laſt mentioned day being fixed upon, his Lordſhip ſoon after, all gratitude and delight, took his leave.

The rapidity with which this arrangement had been made, though upon reflection it appeared to Lady Delmington aſtoniſhing, was calculated at the ſame time to rejoice and flatter her extremely. It evinced in Lord Welwyn ſuch an unbounded reliance in her principles and character—promiſed ſuch a valuable connection to her children, and elated her with ſuch hopes of patronage for Frederick, that ſhe was led to hail the paſt hour as one of the moſt fortunate of her life. All ſhe feared, and the firſt idea

that ſtarted into her mind on hearing the propoſal, was, that Lady Julia Leyburne, accuſtomed from her infancy to ſo much ſplendour, and in her father's houſe to ſo much affluence, ſhould teach her children to lament their own inferiority, to deſpiſe the plain and ſimple habits they had been brought up in, and to pant after luxuries and indulgencies unfit for the mediocrity of their fortunes. This dread, however, was in ſome meaſure removed by the unlimited authority Lord Welwyn had given her over his daughter, an authority which, in caſe of neceſſity, ſhe was reſolutely determined to exert.

A room, the moſt chearful and pleaſant in the houſe, was prepared for the expected viſitor, and a bed put up in a light cloſet next it for her maid. No attention was ſpared in rendering this apartment convenient—and at the appointed time it was ready to receive its deſtined inhabitant.

Lord Welwyn when the day arrived brought her himſelf to the houſe; ſat about a quarter of an hour with Lady Delmington to give the ſervants time to take her things out of the carriage; then

tenderly

tenderly embracing, and recommending her moſt anxiouſly to the whole family, he departed, and purſued his road to Oxford.

The firſt two days of her removal, Lady Julia, though ſhe appeared perfectly ſatisfied with her new abode, and extremely thankful for every attention ſhe received, was grave and ſilent. By degrees, however, her ſpirits, never very high, regained their uſual tone, and if ſhe was not gay, ſhe at leaſt was placid and contented.

Clarentine, who ſince her explanation with Edgar had been all animation and vivacity—whoſe diſpoſition, when unclouded by the accidental and temporary diſtreſſes inſeparable from her ſituation, was always eaſy, ſerene and chearful; Clarentine ſaw not without extreme ſurprize in a young perſon, within a few months, exactly her own age, ſo much her ſuperior in birth and expectations, and ſo laviſhly endowed by nature with every charm that could attach and pleaſe, ſuch a total indifference to thoſe advantages, and ſuch an incapacity to enjoy them with the ſpirit and gratitude they ought to inſpire. Gentle, tender, and diffident, there

was yet a languid ſupineneſs about her that rendered her lifeleſs and inſipid. Devoid of that ſportive activity, that playful careleſsneſs of temper ſo natural to youth, ſhe foreſaw danger, difficulty, or trouble, in every thing ſhe undertook; heſitated whether to quit her ſeat, ſet out on a walk, or run the ſlighteſt riſk of fatigue, till wearied herſelf of being ſolicited, and completely wearifome to every body elſe —in ſhort, was ſlow to a degree that was abſolutely tormenting in all ſhe did, and quick in nothing but in diſcovering, or fancying ſhe diſcovered, coldneſs in the looks or voice of thoſe ſhe loved. Fears, ſilent lamentations, ſighs, and an air of miſery at once the moſt profound and the moſt unaccountable, ſucceeded to theſe fancied ſlights; for a time ſhe abandoned herſelf to the deepeſt deſpondency—grieved bitterly over her own fate; and only ſhook off the gloom that preyed upon her ſpirits, by efforts the moſt painful, and ſtruggles the moſt inceſſant.

To counterbalance theſe little foibles, however, which reaſon and experience it was believed would effectually eradicate, ſhe had many real excellencies, and among the

the reſt, her ſtrong attachment, her veneration for her father was the moſt conſpicuous. Next to him, ſhe ſoon, as he had predicted, learnt to reverence and love Lady Delmington. For her daughters, Harriet in particular, ſhe felt nothing but indifference: they had not any thing ſufficiently ſtriking in their characters to touch a heart ſo ſlow to imbibe affection, though ſo warm, ſo ſincere, ſo entirely devoted, when once attached. Great, or very amiable qualities could alone excite her attention—animate her into reſpect—or ſurprize her into admiration. Lady Delmington appeared to her to poſſeſs the former; ſhe therefore obeyed her with deference, and conſulted her with humility: Clarentine, ſhe thought, poſſeſſed the latter; ſhe therefore loved, courted, and diſtinguiſhed her with unbounded partiality: ſpent the greateſt part of her time in her room, or in walking with her over the grounds: wondered at her conſtant activity, and almoſt envied her unobtruſive gaiety.

Clarentine on her part, intereſted by the mild virtues of her new friend, yet pitying the liſtleſs indolence that ſo un-

happily enfeebled thoſe virtues, endeavoured by every art, every effort, to infuſe into her mind greater energy and vigour. Neither gentle remonſtrances, example nor entreaties were left untried; now gaily, now ſeriouſly, ſhe reaſoned with her upon her total want of firmneſs, her inattention and ſpiritleſs indifference concerning every thing that required real application; and at length awakened her to a ſenſation bordering upon emulation; ſucceeded by repeated ſolicitations in prevailing upon her, rather than be always dependant upon others, ſometimes to aſſiſt herſelf; and convinced her of the neceſſity, if ſhe wiſhed to be happy, of employing her time, if not uſefully, at leaſt rationally.

'Four months ſpent in daily obſerving theſe leſſons put in practice by her young and lovely monitreſs, had a moſt aſtoniſhing effect upon Lady Julia, and almoſt compleated her reformation. Happier than ſhe had ever been in her life, occupied in acquiring talents, and in obtaining information, her attachment to Clarentine ſeemed hourly to encreaſe, her own

improvement

improvement to advance, and her underſtanding to enlarge.

CHAP. X.

ABOUT this time Frederick Delmington was ſummoned to Portſmouth again to embark with his friend Somerſet. Rejoiced by ſuch a call, though concerned by the affliction it ſeemed to give his family, half melancholy and half delighted, he bade adieu to his mother and ſiſters, forgot not to recommend to them his *poney*, and at an early hour ſat out on his journey.

He was replaced within a week by his brother, whoſe holidays were now commenced, and whoſe return was hailed with the uſual ſatisfaction.

Lady Julia had never ſeen him, and notwithſtanding the praiſes ſhe had heard beſtowed on him, almoſt dreaded his arrival, ſo infinitely had ſhe been diſtreſſed by Frederick's boiſterous gaiety, and ſo

greatly did ſhe apprehend a repetition of the ſame ſcenes.

His firſt appearance however inſtantly diſpelled all her fears, and left her only ſenſible to feelings of admiration and ſurpriſe.

Sir Edgar Delmington, now turned of nineteen, tall, manly, and elegant, united to a face, glowing with ſenſibility and good-humour, an eaſe and even dignity of manners and addreſs, rarely, at any age, to be excelled. Conſcious of no ſuperiority, or if conſcious, diligent in concealing it, his converſation was as pleaſing as his form; animated without turbulence, ſenſible without conceit, and gentle without effeminacy.

The little graceful figure of Lady Julia, her ſoft and intereſting countenance, ſeemed, from the moment of his introduction to her, to charm him extremely. He congratulated his mother upon having obtained ſuch an acquiſition to her family, and evidently addreſſed himſelf more willingly, and alſo more frequently to her, than to a mere ſtranger, he had ever been known to do before.

At dinner, however, the object of his attention

attention was wholly changed. Clarentine, who when he arrived was out with Emma, then firſt entered the room, her cheeks tinged with the united glow of exerciſe and pleaſure, her fine eyes ſparkling with undiſſembled joy, and her ready hand eagerly extended to welcome home with ſmiles of cordial ſatisfaction her long abſent favorite. Fortunately for Edgar, Lady Delmington, not yet deſcended into the dining-parlour, eſcaped being witneſs to their firſt meeting; had ſhe beheld it, his countenance would infallibly have betrayed him, ſince, moſt evidently imprinted on it, for a moment, were all the affectionate emotions of his heart, the tranſport with which he again ſurveyed her, and the admiration with which he viewed her improvement in beauty and in ſtature.

The caution, however, he had obſerved when at home before, he ſtill after this interview reſolutely, and as if upon ſyſtem adhered to. The preſence of Lady Julia facilitated to him the performance of this taſk, as ſhe and Clarentine were inſeparable companions, and therefore effectually relieved him from all apprehenſion of

ever being ſurprized a moment by his mother alone with the latter.

The walks, the amuſements, the converſations of the two young friends now became more pleaſing than ever: Edgar was continually of their parties; divided his attention equally between them, and to all appearance divided likewiſe his regard.

A melancholy event occurred about this time, which heightened the intereſt felt by the whole family for their amiable inmate. Accounts arrived from Lord Welwyn of the death of his ſon at Naples, and Julia, tenderly attached to her brother, heard the intelligence, though communicated in the moſt cautious manner, with a degree of affliction, that almoſt overwhelmed her.

Lady Delmington, condemning, as irrational, an exceſs of ſorrow ſhe yet could not but compaſſionate; and believing that when this firſt paroxyſm of grief was paſt, the helpleſs little ſufferer would gladly ſeek a refuge from her own melancholy thoughts in the ſympathy of her friends, forbore aggravating her diſtreſs, by auſtere remonſtrances, or an unfeel-

ing exertion of her authority, and patiently awaited the moment when reſignation would take the place of deſpair, and her heart would be open to the ſoothings of kindneſs, and the voice of conſolation.

Clarentine, who in ſenſibility was Lady Julia's equal, but in underſtanding infinitely her ſuperior, was too generous to take offence at being for ſome days, in common with the reſt of the family, excluded her apartment; and too affectionate, though in the ſame circumſtances certain ſhe ſhould have ſhewn more fortitude, to mingle any reproaches with the tears and careſſes that attended their firſt meeting.

A ſadneſs, a dejection ſhe attempted not even to conquer or conceal, now took entire poſſeſſion of Lady Julia's mind. She fatigued no one with complaints, but her countenance loſt all traces of that animation ſhe had been ſo long acquiring; chearleſs, ſilent, and incapable of exerting the ſlighteſt degree of ſelf-controul, ſhe wandered, as Lady Delmington termed it, with *reſtleſs inactivity* about the houſe, a deſolate, unſocial being, unfit for converſation, and unwilling to be amuſed.

Clarentine

Clarentine at length, diſcouraged from making any further efforts to remove her depreſſion, reluctantly gave up the attempt; watched her with looks of pity wherever ſhe went, but never offered to follow her, and never intruded upon her retirement.

It was now happy for Edgar, that the term of his abſence from Eton was again nearly expired. Clarentine left to herſelf, or only ſitting with Emma, was a far more dangerous object, than Clarentine conſtantly attended by a friend ſo aſſiduous as Lady Julia. He dreaded his own want of reſolution; feared to betray the emotions of his heart, and living in perpetual reſtraint, bleſſed the hour that once more tore him from her.

This was to be the laſt time of his going to Eton, from whence on the next vacation he was to be entered at Oxford.

Lord Welwyn, in leſs than ſix weeks after the news arrived of his ſon's death, came back to England himſelf. The firſt interview between him and Lady Julia was truly affecting, though the father in his grief preſerved a manly compoſure, a firmneſs,

firmneſs, very unlike the boundleſs ſorrow of his weeping daughter.

Deſirous of taking her home immediately, yet anxious to ſpare her the pain of too abrupt a ſeparation from her late companions, he drew her aſide, and aſked *which* of the Miſs Delmington's ſhe moſt wiſhed to invite with her to Welwyn park?

Julia, gratefully ſenſible of this kindneſs, immediately anſwered—

"Though I have ſeemed for ſome time to neglect and ſhun her; and though ſhe has cauſe perhaps to accuſe me of want of affection—yet, if I may make a choice, Clarentine, Lady Delmington's niece, is the one I ſhould fix upon in preference to any of her couſins."

"Enough, my Julia," ſaid her father, "before we go, I will make the propoſal."

Accordingly, after dining and ſpending the greateſt part of the evening with Lady Delmington, having ordered his horſes to be put to, he ſaid—

"The longer your Ladyſhip knows me, the more reaſon you will have, I fear, to accuſe me of encroaching upon your indulgence. My daughter, for near three months

months, habituated to the ſociety of young people of her own age, who, without any other company, have it always in their power to form an agreeable and chearful family circle among themſelves, will feel moſt painfully, I have no doubt, the hardſhip of a ſeparation, ſo ſudden and ſo entire, as that ſhe is now about to ſuffer. The ſolitude and gloom of a large and almoſt uninhabited manſion, to her in the preſent diſpoſition of her mind, muſt appear dreadful. Might I then, deareſt Madam, ſolicit for her the conſolation of having with her, at leaſt during the firſt week or two of her removal, one of your young folks as a companion? I aſk not for either of your daughters, ſince it might be inconvenient or diſagreeable to you to part with them; but ſpare me, for the ſhort time I mention, your charming little niece. She looks the picture of innocence, artleſſneſs, and good-humour. Her ſociety will by degrees reconcile Julia to her change of abode, and teach her, perhaps, to give leſs indulgence to her own melancholy reflections."

Lady Delmington, fully ſenſible of the advantages Clarentine might derive from this

this viſit, heſitated not a moment, but inſtantly ſent to bid her prepare for her departure. Julia herſelf entreated to be the bearer of the meſſage, and at the head of the ſtairs, meeting Clarentine coming down with little Emma, ſhe ſtopped her, and affectionately taking her hand, ſaid—

"Do you ſtill love me enough, dear Clarentine, to wiſh to oblige me?"

"Do I?" cried Clarentine, earneſtly; "can you doubt it?"

Lady Julia then made her acquainted with what had juſt paſſed, and begged her to haſten back to her room to pack up her cloaths; at the ſame time calling for her own maid to aſſiſt her.

In a quarter of an hour Clarentine was ready; the carriage came to the door, and Lord Welwyn, penetrated with the deepeſt gratitude towards Lady Delmington, took leave of her and her daughters, and departed with his young companions.

Welwyn park was about ſeven miles from Delmington Houſe, and before the day ſhut in, the carriage drove through the great iron gates that led up to the houſe. Clarentine had yet never ſeen it; never travelled ſo far in her life! ſhe

gazed

gazed around her with aſtoniſhment and admiration! the pictureſque and extenſive park they had driven through, the ſtately magnificence of the building, the elegance of the decorations within, and the luxuriancy of the proſpect without, all contributed to enchant and amaze her!

"Good Heaven!" cried ſhe, addreſſing Lady Julia, "how unlike this ſuperb houſe is, to the old and gloomy habitation we have juſt left! How light, ſpacious, and lofty are theſe rooms! How beautiful thoſe immenſe mirrors! How vivid the glow of theſe pictures! Oh, what a paradiſe you have brought me to!"

Lady Julia, ſurpriſed, yet pleaſed at the warmth of her friend's admiration, ſmiled, and taking her by the hand, conducted her to the upper part of the houſe to ſhew her the room ſhe was to ſleep in.

"This," ſaid ſhe, throwing open the door of a large bed-chamber, after aſcending a noble ſtair-caſe, "is my room; if you like to ſhare it with me, dear Clarentine, you know how happy you will make me; there is one beyond it, however, equally pleaſant, which, if you prefer, ſhall

ſhall be immediately prepared for you. Will you come and look at it?"

"O no;" cried Clarentine, ſhrinking back, "let me ſleep with you in this. I, who have been uſed to ſo ſmall a room, and that too, in partnerſhip with my little Emma, ſhould feel quite deſerted and comfortleſs by myſelf in ſo large a one as this."

"Then," ſaid Julia, turning back, "we will go no further. Tea will be ready by this time; ſhall we go down?"

Clarentine conſented, and they again joined Lord Welwyn.

In the courſe of the evening, as his Lordſhip never left the room, and converſed freely and kindly with his young gueſt; he gave her an opportunity, by ſtarting the ſubject himſelf, to deſcant warmly in praiſe of the family ſhe lived with. At laſt, Frederick was mentioned, and Lord Welwyn, but imperfectly acquainted with the particulars of his flight, drew from Clarentine a more detailed account of it! When ſhe pauſed—

"In what capacity," ſaid his Lordſhip, ſmiling, "is this enterprizing youth now gone out?"

"In

"In that of midſhipman, I believe, my Lord," anſwered Clarentine.

"And what is your friend Somerſet's rank?"

"That, I underſtand, of lieutenant, my Lord. He has hopes of promotion on his return home."

Lord Welwyn then changed the ſubject.

Clarentine, accuſtomed to riſe almoſt the firſt in the houſe at Delmington, was up and dreſſed, the morning after her arrival, before ſix o'clock. Lady Julia was ſtill aſleep, and Clarentine, neither perfectly knowing her way about the houſe, nor being aſſured that in going down ſhe might not diſturb Lord Welwyn, ſeated herſelf at a window in the next room with her drawing materials, till the ſervants aroſe, when ſhe determined to find her way out, and wander into the park.

In leſs than an hour ſhe heard the ſhutters below ſtairs unbarred, and, on looking out, ſaw the gardener and his aſſiſtants already at work. This gave her courage, and ſhe ſtepped ſoftly down.

At the foot of the ſtairs, ſhe applied to a maid-ſervant, who was croſſing the hall, for

for the key of the houſe door. The woman ſaid it had been unlocked ſome time. Clarentine waited for no more; but, light and active, ſprung forward, and too eager to conſider which way ſhe ſhould go, guided her ſteps as chance directed, towards a beautiful and flouriſhing plantation to the left of the houſe.

It was now the beginning of June; the morning was mild, ſerene, and unclouded. Every ſhrub was in the fulleſt bloom—every leaf ſpangled with dew—the air, ſoft and pure as Clarentine's own heart, gladdened and refreſhed her, and infuſed into her innocent mind the warmeſt ſentiments of gratitude and devotion!

As ſhe purſued her walk, ſhe came to a little winding path, that conducted her at length to the palings of the park next the road-ſide. There was a gate at no great diſtance, which ſhe obſerved was open; ſhe went towards it; and ſaw a venerable old man, who was Lord Welwyn's butler, coming out of a miſerable cottage on the oppoſite ſide of the road, immediately fronting the gate. He ſeemed ſurpriſed when he perceived her; but paſſed

paſſed her without ſpeaking, and by the ſame path which had guided her thither, walked back to the houſe.

Clarentine, after he was gone, ſtood ſome time motionleſs at the gate, contemplating with ſorrowing eyes the wretched habitation before her. If now, on one of the fineſt days in ſummer, ſurrounded with verdure, cheared by the bright rays of a glowing ſun—if *now*, it looked ſo comfortleſs and forlorn, what, though Clarentine ſighing, muſt be its aſpect, when the bleak winds of winter, the chilling rains, and foggy atmoſphere of a December day, penetrate through its decayed thatch, and damp and moulder its thin tottering walls!

Well might ſhe then, in the words of Shakeſpear, have exclaimed—

" Poor naked wretches, whoſo'er you are,
" That bide the pelting of the pitileſs ſtorm!
" How ſhall your houſeleſs heads, and unfed ſides,
" Your loop'd and window'd raggedneſs, defend you
" From ſeaſons ſuch as thoſe?
" ——————— Take phyſick, pomp;
" Expoſe thyſelf to feel what wretches feel,
" Then wilt thou ſhake thy ſuperflux to them,
" And ſhew the Heavens more juſt."

" Can

"Can it be poſſible," thought ſhe, "that Lord Welwyn, a good, a benevolent, and humane man, poſſeſſing ſo much power, and bleſt with ſuch affluence, ſhould ſuffer, at his *very gate*, an abode like this—ſo deſolate, ſo dreary, to fall into ruin, merely from a cruel indifference to the diſtreſs of its inhabitants?"

Whilſt ſhe was engaged in theſe reflections, a young woman of a very delicate appearance, ſlim, perfectly well-formed, and dreſſed in a light-coloured cotton gown, without any thing upon her head but a band of muſlin, careleſsly tied round her hair, came out of the cottage, with a low wooden ſtool in her hand, and an embroidering frame under her arm. She placed the ſtool in the ſhade before the door; ſat down, and taking the frame upon her knees, began to work with great alacrity; at the ſame moment, ſinging with a gay and chearful countenance a well-known French air, Clarentine remembered to have heard William Somerſet, in detached parts, often hum about the houſe.

In a few minutes, a very pretty little girl, of about ſix years old, followed by a gentleman in a ſhabby uniform, likewiſe

appeared at the door. The trees that ſurrounded Clarentine prevented her being perceived, yet allowed her plainly to diſtinguiſh every thing that paſſed. She heard the gentleman, after ſtanding ſome time before the cottage, looking at the unclouded ſky with admiration, turn to his induſtrious companion, and ſay to her in French—

"Ma bonne amie, voulez-vous que je vous liſe quelque choſe pendant que vous travaillez?"

"Oui, je le veut bien;" anſwered ſhe, "allez chercher les *Lettres Peruviennes*; elles ſonts ſur ma table."*

In an inſtant the book was brought. The officer threw himſelf down upon the graſs by the ſide of the young foreigner, and began reading aloud; whilſt the child, leaning againſt its mother's ſhoulder, ſtood quietly watching the progreſs of her work.

Clarentine beheld this intereſting ſcene with the tendereſt concern and pity. She

* "My good friend, ſhall I read to you whilſt you work?"

"Yes, do; bring hither the *Peruvian Letters*; they are upon my table."

had

had heard much of the diſaſtrous effects of the late French Revolution; knew to what direful lengths the cruelty of its promoters had extended; and had often ſighed with compaſſion at the dreadful recital of thoſe calamities many of its innocent victims had ſuffered, even at the beginning of the diſturbances. This was the firſt time, however, that in her peaceful retirement any of the actual ſufferers themſelves had appeared; and the impreſſion made upon her by ſuch a ſight was therefore proportioned to its novelty. Who the objects were, then before her, it was impoſſible to gueſs; but from their language and manners, it was evident they were people of education and refinement. Clarentine longed to ſpeak to them, to queſtion them, but had not courage; and after remaining to obſerve them till ſhe dared remain no longer, turned away with reluctance, and walked ſlowly home.

On entering the houſe ſhe was informed that Lady Julia was waiting breakfaſt for her; but that my Lord had already finiſhed his, and was gone out on horſeback. Eager to communicate the diſcovery of the morning, ſhe haſtened into the break-

faſt room, where, alone at an open window, ſhe found Lady Julia reading.

Clarentine immediately began her relation, and gave ſo animated, yet faithful a detail of all ſhe had ſeen, that Lady Julia expreſſed the utmoſt impatience to hear from the butler what further particulars he might have to recount. Accordingly, ſhe rang the bell and deſired he might be called; but was told he had been out the greateſt part of the morning, and had not left word whither he was gone.

"Why then, Clarentine," cried Lady Julia, riſing as ſhe ſpoke with uncommon alacrity, "we will walk down to the cottage ourſelves, and make acquaintance with theſe poor foreigners this very morning. Shall you have courage enough when there are *two* of us to venture to ſpeak?"

Clarentine, with great readineſs, anſwered in the affirmative; and Lady Julia, tying on her hat, took her friend under the arm, and ſallied forth without delay.

On their arrival at the little gate oppoſite the cottage, they perceived that the ſpot where Clarentine had firſt diſcovered the ſtrangers was deſerted. The ſun,

which

which had now riſen to a conſiderable height, had driven them in; and the two friends, therefore, after croſſing the road, were obliged to ſummon all their reſolution, and knock at the cottage door for admittance.

A little girl, about a year older than the one Clarentine had ſeen in the morning, immediately opened it. The ſight of two ſuch entire ſtrangers filled her with diſmay. She almoſt ſcreamed the inſtant ſhe beheld them, and ran away with a ſwiftneſs which nothing but terror could have lent her.

Upon this, the young female, whom Clarentine ſuppoſed to be her mother, ſtarted from her ſeat and ſprung forward, anxiouſly enquiring what was the matter? The unexpected appearance of Lady Julia and Clarentine nearly aſtoniſhed her as much as it had alarmed the child. She bluſhed—curtſied very politely—invited them to walk in; and, when they were ſeated, aſked in a heſitating voice, to what cauſe ſhe was to attribute the honour of ſuch a viſit?

Lady Julia, with a delicacy, a cautious fear of offending, that added to the wonted

ſweetneſs of her countenance, and gave to it an expreſſion of benevolence the moſt angelic, apologized for the abruptneſs with which ſhe had ventured to introduce herſelf; beſeeching the young ſtranger not to impute it to any motives of impertinent curioſity, but ſolely to the earneſt deſire ſhe felt, as being her moſt immediate neighbour, to offer her ſuch comforts or aſſiſtance, as the inconvenience of her preſent ſituation might render neceſſary.

The young ſtranger, penetrated with gratitude for an attention ſo flattering and unexpected, bowed her thanks, and ſighing deep, ſaid, pointing to her children—

"For myſelf, dear Madam, I require little; *my* wants, I thank Heaven! I have learnt to contract within a very narrow compaſs; but whilſt my children, thus helpleſs and dependent, lean wholly upon me for ſupport, I feel myſelf bound to embrace with eagerneſs any offer which benevolence may dictate towards alleviating their neceſſities."

Clarentine, much affected by this ſpeech, touched by the patient humility of the meek

meek ſufferer, and the look of anguiſh with which ſhe regarded her infants whilſt acknowledging their diſtreſs; now aſked whether ſhe had any other children than the two ſweet girls then preſent?

"I have one more," anſwered the ſtranger, "a boy in arms, who is at this time aſleep in the next room. I have a brother-in-law with me likewiſe: but my huſband is with General ——'s army, as well as moſt of my other connections and friends."

"May we aſk, Madam," ſaid Lady Julia, "how long you have been in this part of the country?"—

"About ten days. I was led hither by the hope of finding the neceſſaries of life cheaper than in the capital; and alſo with a view of benefit to my brother, who is much out of health, and with whom the air of London diſagreed extremely."

"I fear you have yet made no acquaintance here?"

"Helas! Mademoiſelle," ſaid the ſtranger, mournfully—"Eſt ce dans une poſition comme le miene qu'on fait des connoiſances?

noiſances? Je ſens bien que le malheur n'eſt pas en droit de ſi attendre!"*

"I am grieved to hear you think ſo;" —cried Lady Julia—"We had flattered ourſelves it might have been in our power to have inſpired you with better hopes; ſince it is our moſt ardent wiſh to ſerve you, and to obtain your confidence and good opinion."—

The unhappy foreigner, overcome by the kindneſs of this ſpeech, burſt into tears, and preſſing Lady Julia's hand to her boſom with a look of ſenſibility the moſt impaſſioned, ſobbed out, in broken, and ſcarce intelligible ſentences, the grateful effuſions of her heart—

"Ange du ciel!" exclaimed ſhe— "Quel être bienfaiſant et génereux, a pu vous conduire dans cette triſte demeure? Si jeune encore, eſt-il poſſible qu'on puiſe avoir autant de prévenance, de bonté, de delicateſſe? Ah! dite moi —qui êtes-vous? d'ou venez vous?"†

"My

* "Alas! Madam, is it in ſuch a ſituation as mine I can hope to form any new acquaintance? I am ſenſible it is not misfortune that can give me a right to expect it!"

† "Angel of Heaven! What being, beneficent, and good, can have conducted you to this wretched abode? Is

"My name," anſwered Lady Julia, "is Leyburne. I live at the great houſe, (chateau) you ſee yonder behind that plantation. Who *you* are, I venture not to enquire: but of this be aſſured—you have a friend in me the moſt ſincere, the moſt deeply intereſted in all your concerns."

"Your name is Leyburne?" cried the young ſtranger with a look of ſurpriſe—"You live at the great houſe I have ſo often beheld with a wiſh to know its owners? Ah! you have then beneath your roof an inhabitant, whoſe virtues, whoſe excellence you dream not of! Bertrand, an old domeſtic in your family, who, in happier times ſerved my father abroad, in grateful remembrance of what he owed his former maſter, has ſuccoured, aſſiſted, and befriended me and mine, from the hour of our arrival, with a zeal and activity that does honour to his heart! He brings me daily ſuch little preſents as his circumſtances and ſituation will permit—provides proper nouriſhment for my chil-

Is it poſſible that, young as you are, you ſhould already poſſeſs ſo much delicacy, ſo much tenderneſs? Ah! tell me, who are you? Whence do you come?"

dren—loves them, cheriſhes them,—and in ſhort, has hitherto been our only ſupport and comforter!"

Lady Julia and Clarentine during this recital felt their eyes fill with tears. They both in the ſame breath exclaimed, the inſtant the ſtranger pauſed—

"Worthy, excellent old Bertrand! How I ſhall love him from this moment! But tell me, dear Madam," continued Lady Julia, "did he ever talk to you of my father?—of me?"

"Yes, often. He repreſented you to me, ſuch as I find you—amiable, gentle, kind! And your father, he ſaid, was the beſt, the firſt of human beings!"

"Ah! believe me," cried Lady Julia, with warmth, "when you know him, when you ſee him, you will find all that Bertrand ſaid was nothing more than ſtrict juſtice!"

She then roſe to take leave, when the young foreigner eagerly ſeizing her hand, and that of Clarentine, who at the ſame moment approached her, joined them in her own, and with the moſt affecting earneſtneſs exclaimed—

"Adieu,

« Adieu, aimables et douces amies! Soyez toujours unies, toujours compagnes! et faſſe le ciel, que poſſedant les mêmes vertus, vous jouïſſiez du même bonheur!' *

Unable to ſpeak, the two friends could only preſs with ſilent emotion the hand that held theirs, and hurry out of the cottage.

CHAP. XI.

LADY Julia's firſt care on entering the houſe was to ſend for the old butler. He came the inſtant he was ſummoned, anxious to apologize for his abſence in the morning, and to learn how he could be uſeful to his young miſtreſs.

Lady Julia, into whom the benevolent ſenſations awakened by all that had paſſed, ſeemed to have infuſed a ſpirit, an energy unknown to her before, ran to him the

* " Adieu, ſweet, and amiable friends! May you always love, always accompany each other! And may it pleaſed Heaven that, poſſeſſing the ſame virtues, you may enjoy the ſame felicity."

moment he appeared, and taking his hand, ſaid,

" My kind, and honeſt Bertrand! you muſt teach me to become good, and generous like you! I have heard *ſuch* ſtories of you as have won my very heart! Oh! why did I not ſooner hear how I might aſſiſt you in all you did?"—

Bertrand, who although he had lived 15 years in England, poſſeſſed every merit to a higher degree of perfection than that of talking or even underſtanding the language of the country, looked aghaſt at this ſpeech, and with an air of aſtoniſhment the moſt profound, ſaid, in a mixed dialect, half French, half Engliſh—

" What, *pour l'amour de Dieu!* you talk about, my dear young Lady? I not *comprend* von vord dat you ſay!"

Lady Julia then, in French, explained to him more methodically her meaning; told him where ſhe had been; what ſhe had heard concerning him; and finally beſought him to inform her of all the particulars he was acquainted with relating to her new friend.

" *Ah! Pardi!* I know vat you ſay ver vell now!" cried the delighted Bertrand, recovering

recovering from his late amazement—"You talk of von poor lady at the *chaumiére? Bon!* I underſtand ver vell. *Qu'en faut il dire?*"*

"Nay, Bertrand," anſwered Lady Julia—"You know beſt what you can ſay of her! You are acquainted with her name and family, are you not? And you likewiſe muſt have heard her reaſons for coming to England."

"*Surement*, I have heard them! Ah! poor lady! I knew her in her own country, when ſhe was *pas plus haute que mon ponce:** O, ſhe was pretty, pretty! and *ſo* good! Her father he was von *grand Seigneur*, and he had but this child—*c'eſt-à-dire*, but this von alive. *Eh bien*, as he was always at Verſailles, at the Court, he did marry her to von great man alſo, M. le Compte d'Arzele, who was a *vieux papa* compared to her, for ſhe was but fifteen, and he was forty. *Mais Dame! malgre* that, ſhe did make von ver good wife—At leaſt, ſo I always heard, for I left Paris when ſhe was only ten years old. *Malheureuſement* when *la pauvre France* was

* "What muſt I tell you about her?"
† "No higher than my hand."

turned

turned *ſans deſſu deſſous*, her father, *mon bon vieux maitre*, was in high favour at the court, and *Helas!* died, it was ſaid, of *grief*, at the beginning of the horrors! His poor daughter then, with her children, got over to England; her huſband was with the army, her *beau-frere ſe mourant de conſomption*;* *enfin* every thing went ſo bad, that after ſtaying two or three months in London, *n'aiant preſque pas le ſous*, ſhe came down here, where, *un beau matin*, about a week ago I found her out in that miſerable *cabane!*"

Here Bertrand pauſed, ſhrugged his ſhoulders with a moſt piteous look, heaved a deep ſigh, and then proceeded thus—

"Mi lor was not come home, when I did firſt diſcover her; *ainſi* I could do but little towards ſhewing my gratitude to the daughter of my late maſter: but now dat he is here, and dat you, my good ladi Julie have ſeen her, I hope her ſituation will be no longer ſo *triſte*. I did mean this morning to have told all her ſtory to my maſter; but before I got back from the cottage he was gone out; and ſo, *il faut garder cela pour une autre fois*."†

* "Her brother-in-law dying of a conſumption."

† "I muſt reſerve it for another time."

"But

"But tell me, my good Bertrand," cried Clarentine "how comes it about, that this unfortunate Madame d'Arzele, whoſe fate ſo juſtly deſerves compaſſion, ſhould, this very morning, ſoon after you paſſed me at the park gate, be ſinging and talking with a chearfulneſs that was quite aſtoniſhing?"

"Dame! c'eſt qu'elle eſt naturellement vive, enjoucé, folâtre! un rien la fait pleurer, un rien le fait rire. Voiez donc? Ce n'eſt pas avec un tel caractere qu'on devient ſombre et triſte tout de ſuite; auſſi, ſoutient-elle ſes chagrins avec un courage vraiment étonant; travaillant toujours, brodant, faiſant de la dentelle—enfin de tout—et chantant, cauſant, badinant tant qu'elle peut."*

At that moment the entrance of Lord Welwyn put an end to the ſubject. Ber-

* "Ah, truly! that is becauſe ſhe is naturally ſpirited, playful, and lively; a mere trifle makes her cry, a trifle makes her laugh! You may well believe therefore, that with ſuch a diſpoſition, it is not all at once that ſhe can become gloomy and deſponding. The fortitude with which ſhe has borne her ſorrows has been truly admirable. She works continually; embroiders, makes lace, in ſhort, does any thing! and laughs and ſings whenever ſhe can.

trand immediately withdrew; but not before he had recommended to Lady Julia by a ſignificant glance, the cauſe of his ill-fated miſtreſs.

Meanwhile Lord Welwyn, whoſe mind ſeemed to be as much preoccupied as was that of his daughter, ſeated himſelf near the window, and after a few moments ſilence, ſaid,

"I have been engaged in converſation this morning with a perſon whoſe diſcourſe has left ſuch an impreſſion of melancholy on my mind, that I feel myſelf quite oppreſſed, and ſaddened."

"Who then, my Lord," ſaid Lady Julia, "was this perſon?"

"His name," anſwered her father, "I did not hear; he was a young Frenchman however, and an Emigrant. I met him walking ſlowly by the road-ſide, in a narrow lane at the diſtance of about two miles from hence; he ſtopped to let my horſe go by, and as I paſſed, looked up at me, and ſlightly touched his hat. Struck by the dejection and languor viſible in his countenance, and by a certain air of diſtinction obſervable about him, notwithſtanding the meanneſs of his dreſs,

dreſs, I returned his bow, and reining in my horſe, ſaid ſomething about the fineneſs of the day, and aſked him whether he had walked far that morning? He anſwered me in French, with great politeneſs, apologizing for not being able to underſtand me. I then addreſſed him in his own language; and, to be ſhort, we ſoon entered into cloſer converſation, during the courſe of which, I diſmounted and ſent home the groom with my horſe, that I might more conveniently purſue a diſcourſe, which now began to intereſt me moſt deeply. What he ſaid of himſelf was ſlight; he ſeemed ſhy of communicating his own affairs; but gave me, in anſwer to my interrogatories ſuch an account of many of the recent tranſactions abroad, to which he had unhappily been witneſs, as made my blood run cold. I underſtand he reſides very near us, with his ſiſter-in-law, and her children; and I have given him a preſſing invitation to come and ſee me. His manners are well-bred, but plain, and unaffected; his language perfectly correct; and his countenance ſenſible, intelligent, and extremely pleaſing."

Lady

Lady Julia, delighted with this account, and not queſtioning but it related to the officer Clarentine had ſeen at the cottage, now began her hiſtory, omitting none of the circumſtances which ſhe thought moſt likely to intereſt her father; and concluding by an earneſt petition for leave to look out immediately in the neighbourhood for a more convenient habitation for Madame d'Arzele, and her unfortunate little family.

Lord Welwyn heard her with the profoundeſt attention, and the moſt evident ſatisfaction; applauded her benevolent intentions, and readily promiſed to aſſiſt her liberally in their execution.

Accordingly, the carriage was ordered, and the inſtant dinner was over Lady Julia, her Governeſs, and Clarentine, ſet out on their intereſting reſearch.

It had been agreed by the two friends, that a houſe half-way between Welwyn park and Delmington would, on every account, be preferable as to ſituation and vicinity, to any other. They therefore gave proper orders to the poſtilion, and proceeded gently forward; gazing with envy at every neat or chearful habitation

tation they paſſed, and forming plans of future happineſs and comfort for their amiable friend.

At the end of a drive of near four miles, they came to a little village, beautifully ſituated at the foot of a hill which commanded one of the fineſt views in nature. Here Lady Julia and her companions ſtopped; and, whilſt the former ſent the ſervant who had attended them to enquire of ſome of the inhabitants whether there were any houſes near there to be let, got out and walked, ordering the poſtilion to follow them at a diſtance.

In a few minutes the ſervant returned to inform his lady that, about a quarter of a mile further up the hill there was a ſmall houſe then unoccupied, which the people he had queſtioned believed was either to be let or ſold. Thither accordingly they immediately drove, and ſoon came to one of the moſt romantic fairy dwellings imagination can conceive! It was ſituated near a little gothic church ſo entirely ſurrounded and concealed by trees, that, at any diſtance, its antique ſpire alone was to be ſeen. Before the door was a green ſlope, ſhaded by thick

branching

branching elms, and encircled by a gravel walk whoſe borders were planted with flowering ſhrubs. Behind it was a neat, ruſtic garden, encloſed by a high hedge, and abundantly ſupplied with all the common fruit-trees and vegetables that the climate affords. The proſpect from the front windows particularly was enchanting; the furniture in all the rooms clean and good, and, in ſhort, the whole habitation remarkable for its chearfulneſs, order, and perfect tranquillity.

Lady Julia, tranſported with delight, could with difficulty contain her raptures, even before the man who was deputed to conduct them. She acquired ſufficient *ſang-froid* at laſt, however, to aſk the neceſſary and uſual queſtions concerning rent, taxes, &c. and then, telling him ſhe would ſend a perſon the next day to make ſome final agreement with him, ſhe reluctantly got into the chaiſe and drove away.

Nothing could equal the gaiety and animation with which ſhe made the journey home. Benevolence, that pureſt of all ſenſations, warms, invigorates, expands the coldeſt heart! It gives joy

and

and happineſs of the moſt exquiſite nature; adds luſtre to the eye of youth, bloom to the cheek, ſmiles of gladneſs to the countenance; and diffuſes ſerenity, internal ſatisfaction, and content whereever it takes root!"

Lord Welwyn welcomed the fair wanderers, with looks of the moſt cordial affection; congratulated them upon the ſucceſs of their expedition; and promiſed to ride over himſelf the next morning in order to adjuſt all pecuniary matters with the proprietors of the houſe, previous to carrying its deſtined tenants to ſurvey it.

This point ſettled, Lady Julia, indefatigable and zealous, ſent for the houſekeeper to her own room, to conſult with her about the domeſtics, with which it would be proper to furniſh the new eſtabliſhment. After a long conference it was agreed, that one maid would be all that at preſent could be required, as Madame d'Arzele, according to Bertrand's account, had brought a *Femme-de-Chambre* with her from France, who had followed her to the cottage. This additional ſervant the houſe-keeper promiſed

miſed to procure: and Lady Julia undertook to pay.

Clarentine, who in all theſe arrangements took the ſtrongeſt intereſt; who rejoiced to behold her friend thus active in the cauſe of humanity; and who obſerved her with wonder and delight, whilſt ſilently planning, or diligently executing freſh acts of kindneſs; Clarentine, the inſtant they retired to their room for the night, threw her arms around her, and embracing her tenderly—

"O my deareſt Lady Julia!" exclaimed ſhe, "how happy you muſt at this moment feel! What pleaſure muſt the recollection of ſuch a day ſo ſpent afford you!"

"Ah! believe me, my Clarentine," anſwered Lady Julia affectionately; "the idea of having merited your praiſe conſtitutes the ſweeteſt portion of my felicity! My father too, with what gentleneſs did he ſpeak to, what kindneſs look at his happy Julia this whole evening! Oh Clarentine, ſupport, encourage me in the wiſh of doing good, that I may long continue to deſerve two bleſſings ſo precious to my heart, as the approbation of ſuch a father, the love of ſuch a friend!"

A few days now ſufficed to conclude every preparation neceſſary to be made, before Madame d'Arzele could be put in poſſeſſion of her charming little abode. Lady Julia, anxious to procure her the additional gratification of ſurprize as well as comfort, reſolutely preſerved the ſtricteſt ſilence upon the ſubject, although ſhe ſaw her every day, and every day gave her freſh inſtances of an attachment the moſt flattering and ſincere, till the impatiently expected moment arrived, when, all things being in readineſs, ſhe attended her herſelf, with her friend Clarentine, to the houſe.

Madame d'Arzele, believing, according to the account ſhe had heard, that this little manſion belonged to Lord Welwyn, and had merely been fitted up during the ſummer months to receive a friend he expected from London, appeared enchanted with it, but paid infinitely leſs attention to the charms of its ſituation than ſhe would have done, had ſhe been informed of the real truth.

After walking over the garden, viſiting the different rooms, and taſting ſome of

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the beſt fruit the former afforded, Madame d'Arzele, ſomewhat impatient at ſo long an abſence from her little family, gently reminded Lady Julia of the lateneſs of the hour—

"My dear Madam," ſaid the latter ſmiling, "you muſt not grow weary of this place yet, for we mean to dine and ſpend the day here."

"Spend the day here?" repeated Madame d'Arzele with a look of conſternation—"Et mes pauvres enfans—que deviendront-ils ſi longtems ſans leur mere?"*

"Vous enfans, Madame," anſwered Lady Julia, enjoying her perplexity—"arriveront dans un moment, et dineront ici avec nous."†

Madame d'Arzele, more and more ſuprized, now gazed by turns at Lady Julia, and Clarentine, with looks of the moſt earneſt curioſity; their countenances however, though beaming with the pureſt delight, told her nothing, yet encreaſed

* "And what, during ſo long an abſence from their mother, will become of my poor children?"

† "Your children, Madam, will arrive in a moment, they are to dine here with us."

her

her wiſh to be informed. At length, therefore, taking Lady Julia's hand, and attentively fixing her eyes on her's—

"Tell me, tell me," ſhe cried, "what this myſterious ſilence, theſe ſignificant looks, this inexplicable delay, tell me what it all means!"

Lady Julia, too generous to keep her longer in ſuſpence, now threw her arms round her, and embracing her affectionately, anſwered with much emotion: "It means, deareſt Madam, that if the ſituation ſuit you, and you can pardon a friend for making ſuch an offer, this houſe, and every thing it contains—is yours!"

Who can deſcribe the raptures and amazement of the delighted Foreigner? She hung round her lovely benefactreſs with ſenſations of gratitude too fervent to be uttered; wept upon her ſhoulder; called her by every endearing epithet that the moſt ardent gratitude could dictate; and then, ſuddenly raiſing her head, and liſtening attentively a moment, ſhe ſprung to the window exclaiming—"Ah Dieu! voici mes enfans."* and quicker than

* "Oh Heavens! here are my children.

lightning flew down ſtairs to meet and welcome them.

In a ſhort time, the children, attended by their French maid, appeared. The two eldeſt, who had, at length, familiarized themſelves to the ſight of Lady Julia and her friend, ran to the former the moment they beheld her, to thank her for the charming ride they had had, and to tell her their uncle was coming immediately with Lord Welwyn, who had promiſed that they ſhould be allowed to dine there—

At theſe words, their mother ſeating herſelf, and calling them both to her, threw an arm round each, and ſaid—

" Eugenie, Pauline—Regardez tout-ce-qui vous entoure—cette charmante maiſon, ce beau jardin, ce coup d'ouil delicieux!—Ehbien, voiez apreſant votre jeune et genereuſe bienfaitrice! C'eſt elle qui vous comble de tout ces dons—vous accorde tant de bonheur a la fois—vous remets en poſſeſſion de tout ce que vous appercevez? Que ferez vous, O mes chers enfans pour meriter tant de bienfaits, pour exprimer la reconnoiſance que doit vous inſpirer un excés de bonté

ſi touchant!

ſi touchant! Ah! tombez a ſes pieds, et remierciez-la pour vous, et votre heureuſe mere!"*

As ſhe uttered this injunction, the tears, which ſhe vainly had endeavoured to diſperſe, forced their way in torrents down her cheeks, and compelled her to pauſe. The children, alarmed at this ſight, and but imperfectly comprehending the tenour of her ſpeech to them, looked fearfully at Lady Julia and at Clarentine, as if to penetrate the cauſe of their mother's apparent grief; and then throwing themſelves into her arms, ſought by their innocent carreſſes to ſooth and calm her agitation.

In the midſt of this ſcene, Lord Welwyn, and Madame d'Arzele's brother-in-

* Eugenie, Pauline—Look at every thing that ſurrounds you—this charming houſe, that delightful garden, that enchanting proſpect! Look now at your young and generous benefactreſs! It is ſhe who enriches you with ſo many gifts, provides for you ſo many bleſſings, and puts you in poſſeſſion of every thing you behold? What, oh my deareſt children! can you do to merit ſuch liberality? How expreſs the gratitude you ought to feel for an exceſs of kindneſs ſo affecting? Oh! run to her, and kneeling, thank her for yourſelves, and for your happy mother!"

law, the Chevalier de Valcour, arrived. For ſome time ſhe was incapable of ſpeaking to them, but by degrees her emotion ſubſiding, ſhe regained all her wonted chearfulneſs and vivacity; ran over her new habitation to ſhew it to the Chevalier, with the ſame alacrity as if ſhe had not viſited it before; played with her children; embraced her two friends; converſed with Lord Welwyn; and till the hour of ſeparation drew near, was in one perpetual tranſport of wild joy and enthuſiaſtic gratitude!

Lady Julia, willing to give her friend leiſure to ſettle herſelf in her tranquil little manſion, forebore calling upon her the three following days: but on the morning of the fourth ſtill accompanied by Clarentine, and crowded in the chaiſe by a thouſand different preſents intended equally for the mother and her children, ſhe determined to viſit her.

Madame d'Arzele, when they arrived, was ſitting in the garden with her children, the youngeſt of whom ſhe held upon her knees, whilſt the eldeſt, ſtanding before her, was repeating to her her morning leſſon. At a little diſtance, the Chevalier

valier de Valcour, mounted upon a ladder, was gathering cherries, and throwing them down to the ſecond girl, Pauline, who with her frock held out ſtood ready to receive them.

Lady Julia and Clarentine remained ſome time at the garden door to enjoy this ſcene of domeſtic happineſs, a ſcene ſo different to that Clarentine had witneſſed the firſt day this little family had attracted her notice! At length, however, Pauline turned her head and ſaw them; in an inſtant, forgetting her cherries, ſhe dropped them all upon the graſs, jumped nimbly over them, and uttering an exclamation of delight, ſprang towards the ſmiling friends with open arms, and led them to her mother, whoſe joy on beholding them was ſcarcely leſs rapturous than that of her lovely little daughter.

When calmneſs was reſtored, and the whole party had adjourned to the uſual ſitting room, Clarentine and Lady Julia had an opportunity, for the firſt time, of judging, from their own obſervation, of the converſation and character of the Chevalier. The reſerve uſually felt by perſons of a retired diſpoſition when they

are firſt introduced to each other, had now given place to greater eaſe and confidence—and as he ſpoke with leſs reſtraint, they anſwered with leſs embarraſſment.

If by the little they had hitherto ſeen of him, they had been prejudiced in his favour by the gentleneſs of his manners, and the elegance of his addreſs, how much more on this interview were they charmed by the information, the liberality of mind, and the kindneſs of heart they found he poſſeſſed. Attentive only to the wiſhes of others, he forgot his own in his deſire to gratify theirs; without officiouſneſs, or affectation, he was the moſt friendly, the moſt active of human beings in the ſervice of thoſe he loved. Silent, and grave before ſtrangers, yet in the ſociety of people he could put confidence in, he was open, chearful, and communicative. Deteſting from principle, and averſe by nature to that ſpecies of unmeaning gallantry, ſo often attributed, with reaſon, to the natives of his country as a characteriſtic blemiſh, he was as little diſpoſed to flatter, as he was to wound. Quiet, ſimple, and rational, his expreſſions were dictated

dictated by ſincerity, his conduct guided by underſtanding and judgment.

It may well be imagined that ſuch a man as this, endowed, in addition to all theſe advantages, with a deportment at once dignified and reſpectful, and a countenance the moſt intereſting and expreſſive, could not fail, as he became more intimately known, to become alſo more particularly approved. The two friends were enchanted with him; and as they returned home, forgot their uſual ſubjects of converſation, Madame d'Arzele and her children, to ſpeak only of the Chevalier de Valcour.

CHAP. XII.

DURING the remaining three weeks that Clarentine ſpent with Lady Julia, ſcarcely three days were ſuffered to elapſe without viſiting Madame d'Arzele, or ſending for her to Welwyn park. In the courſe of that time Lady Julia had ſuc-

ceeded in furniſhing her houſe completely not only with neceſſaries, but with what to people of cultivation are abſolute luxuries, ſuch as books; a well choſen collection of which, in French, ſhe had ſent for from town; an excellent harp that had been purchaſed for her by her father ſome time before, but which, as ſhe found ſhe made no progreſs, ſhe readily gave up, Madame d'Arzele being an uncommonly fine player; a compleat ſet of maps for the children, and all the muſic, for their mother, that had been bought for herſelf.

Clarentine, who ſince her arrival at Welwyn had kept up a regular correſpondence with Sophia Delmington, chiefly for the pleaſure of talking to her of her French friend, had likewiſe excited in her and her mother the moſt ardent wiſh to become acquainted with ſo intereſting a creature. Accordingly ſoon after Clarentine's return home a day was fixed, and her aunt, herſelf, Harriet and Sophia all rode over to *Mont-Repos*, the name Madame d'Arzele had given to her peaceful habitation.

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She received them with that diſtinguiſhed elegance and good breeding, for which the women of high birth and faſhion were formerly ſo remarkable in France. Her converſation, in which gaiety was blended with ſoftneſs, *fineſs* and pleaſantry with the moſt delicate fear of offending; her countenance, which for ever varying, was for ever attractive; her cultivation, her talents and entertainment, all gave riſe, in her enchanted viſitors, to the moſt unbounded aſtoniſhment and admiration.

When the firſt compliments were over, and they had all taken their ſeats, Sophia, who had heard much of the Chevalier and was impatient to ſee him, beſought Clarentine in a low voice, to aſk why he did not appear?

"He is gone to dine at Welwyn Park," anſwered Madame d'Arzele, "where I believe he will ſpend the evening."

This intelligence ſeemed by no means to delight Sophia, though ſhe had the good ſenſe to diſguiſe her vexation, and occaſionally to join in the converſation with all her accuſtomed ſpirit and vivacity.

About an hour before they took leave, Madame d'Arzele's two little girls, anxious to ſhew Clarentine what a delightful *Eſcarpolette** the Chevalier had that morning put up for them in the garden, preſſed her ſo much to go down and look at it, that at laſt ſhe conſented, and accompanied by Sophia left the room.

Shortly after the Chevalier returned. The ſound of voices in the garden, the laughter and the gaiety that ſeemed to reign there, attracted him immediately to the ſpot, where, ſeated in the *Eſcarpolette* with her back turned towards him, he beheld Sophia holding one of his little nieces on each knee, whilſt Clarentine was exerting her utmoſt ſtrength in the agreeable office of ſwinging them.

Advancing cautiouſly forward, he was at Clarentine's elbow before ſhe even ſuſpected he was returned. Her ſurpriſe on ſeeing him would have led her to utter ſome ſudden exclamation: but a ſign he made the moment ſhe turned her head withheld her from ſpeaking, and induced

* Swing.

her

her quietly to reſign her fatiguing poſt, and retire to a greater diſtance.

The Chevalier, whoſe health and ſtrength rendered him ſcarcely more adequate to the taſk, than was the perſon he had juſt relieved, had purſued his occupation but a few minutes, when Sophia, looking back to urge her friend to greater ſpeed, ſaw him, and almoſt ſcreaming with aſtoniſhment, ſprung from her ſeat with the two children in her arms, left them both upon the ground, and ran as quick as lightning towards the houſe, and up-ſtairs in an inſtant!

Extremely amuſed by this *bruſque* retreat, the Chevalier and Clarentine ſtood ſome time laughing at the cauſeleſs terror her looks had diſplayed, and then proceeded towards the drawing-room together.

Sophia heard their voices upon the ſtairs, and moving her chair back as much as poſſible, ſought to conceal herſelf behind her mother and ſiſter, in the vain hope that as the evening was beginning to ſhut in, ſhe ſhould eſcape, at leaſt for that once, meeting the eyes of him

whom but a ſhort time before ſhe had ſo earneſtly wiſhed to behold.

Clarentine now entered with the two children, and the Chevalier the next moment followed her.

Madam d'Arzele no ſooner ſaw him, than ſhe exclaimed, "Ah, voila notre bon Chevalier!"* and then immediately requeſted permiſſion to introduce him to Lady Delmington and her daughters.

Sophia trembling at the word *daughters*, would have ſlipped unperceived out of the room till the formidable preſentation was over, but was prevented by the two little girls, who perceiving her deſign, put themſelves between her and the door, and laughing called out, "Ah, Mademoiſelle, vous n'echapperez pas comme cela! Remerciez auparavant mon oncle de vous avoir ſi bien balance!"†

Sophia finding that this ſpeech drew upon her the attention of the whole party, but particularly that of the Chevalier, ſtopped irreſolute—coloured violently,

* "Ah, here comes our good Chevalier."

† "Ah, Mademoiſelle, you muſt not eſcape us thus! Pray thank my uncle firſt for having ſwung you ſo well!"

and

and to his reſpectful bow, returned a ſlight, embarraſſed curtſey, and without daring to look up, retreated haſtily to her former ſeat.

Clarentine followed her, and leaning over the back of her chair was beginning to ſpeak, when Madame d'Arzele, extremely deſirous of knowing to what her children had alluded, called the eldeſt to her, and aſked for an explanation.

"O mama," cried Eugene, diſtreſſed at the confuſion ſhe had already occaſioned, "Mademoiſelle Sophie may not like, perhaps, that I ſhould tell."

This anſwer, though *bonnement* intended for that purpoſe, was but little calculated to ſilence farther enquiries. Lady Delmington, now as anxious to be informed as Madame d'Arzele herſelf, queſtioned Clarentine ſo cloſely, that at laſt the whole important ſecret was revealed.

"Ah, mon dieu! n'eſt-ce-que cela?" cried Madame d'Arzele, with a laugh—"En verité, Mademoiſelle Sophie, il n'y avoit pas de quoi rouger ſi cruellement. Le Chevalier m'a balancé ce matin, dans cette meme eſcarpolette, une demi heure de

de ſuite, et jamais je ne me ſerez aviſir d'en avoir honte."*

"Nor Sophia neither, in all probability," anſwered Lady Delmington, ſmiling, "had ſhe not been ſo much taken by ſurpriſe. The Chevalier, I think, is entitled, however, to her beſt thanks for his politeneſs in undertaking ſuch an office, eſpecially as he was diſintereſted enough to do it even unknown to the perſon whom he obliged."

The Chevalier laughed and bowed; but forebore dwelling upon the ſubject, from motives of good-nature, as he ſtill plainly ſaw it diſconcerted Sophia extremely.

After this firſt introduction, the Delmingtons ſoon became as intimate with Madame d'Arzele as Lord Welwyn himſelf. The pleaſure of having, in ſo near a neighbour, ſo agreeable an acquaintance, at a ſeaſon when viſiting was ſo practicable; the hope alſo, by ſhewing her all the intereſt and affection ſhe inſpired, of ſof-

* "Bleſs me! Was that all? Indeed, Mademoiſelle Sophie, I ſee nothing in all this that need have made you bluſh ſo cruelly. The Chevalier ſwung *me* this morning near half an hour—yet I ſhould never have looked upon it as a thing to be aſhamed of."

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tening the remembrance of her recent ſorrows, and of ſupplying to her, in ſome meaſure, the place of thoſe friends ſhe had ſo unhappily loſt—all theſe motives combined occaſioned an intercourſe far more frequent, than, had ſhe been in more proſperous circumſtances, would perhaps have taken place. Lady Delmington, though ſhe rarely walked ſo far herſelf, never denied her daughters or Clarentine the permiſſion of doing it; and conſequently their viſits at *Mont-Repos* whilſt the weather allowed it, were almoſt daily. As the winter approached, however, they were neceſſitated, of courſe, to retrench them; yet, even then, Clarentine's warmth of attachment led her dauntleſsly to brave the ſevereſt temperature of a December day, and with ſteps as light as her heart to ſally gaily forth, wrapt round in a long *Peliſſe*, for the habitation of her friend.

At thoſe times, when the weather was too boiſterous to allow of her return home the ſame evening, ſome ſhepherd's boy from the adjacent village uſed to be diſpatched with a note to Delmington, to requeſt leave for her to ſtay till morning. This, her aunt, rather than ſend the ſervants and horſes

horſes out at ſuch a ſeaſon, always conſented to; and the more readily, from being perſuaded that Clarentine, whilſt with Madame d'Arzele, could reap nothing but benefit, and enjoy nothing but ſatisfaction.

It was, during one of theſe bleak and ſtormy evenings, towards the latter end of January, that whilſt Madame d'Arzele and Clarentine, who was that night to ſleep there, were engaged in converſation before a chearful fire, the former ſuddenly turning to her young friend, with more than uſual tenderneſs, ſaid—

"My Clarentine, for you now allow me to call you by that endearing name, explain to me by what ſtrange circumſtance it could happen, that you, an Engliſhwoman, born in a province ſo remote from our coaſt, and where *les uſages* of our country are ſo little known, ſhould have been baptized by a name, which to Engliſh ears muſt ſound ſo romantic; and which, though abſolutely French, is by no means common, even among us, ſince I never knew more than *one* perſon before, that was ſo called?"

Clarentine, ſtruck by the tone of voice with which Madam d'Arzele ſpoke theſe laſt words, took her hand the moment ſhe pauſed, and ſaid—

"That perſon, whom you mention with ſo melancholy a look—was ſhe dear to you?"

"Oh! dearer than any being upon earth! She was my ſiſter."

"Ah, tell me," cried Clarentine, with an earneſtneſs ſhe could neither repreſs, nor account for; "tell me, what was her ſtory? Why do you ſpeak of her with ſuch emotion and ſadneſs?"

"Alas!" anſwered Madame d'Arzele, "in aſking for her ſtory, you demand more than I have power to grant. I never heard the exact particulars of it myſelf. Probably they were concealed from me from motives of prudence, it being well-known that whatever might have been her errors, I ſhould be the laſt to ſee them with that indignation they ſeemed to have excited in every other individual of my family. I loved her too tenderly not to pity and forgive her faults; and the knowledge of them, therefore, was deemed the more dangerous."

"Was

"Was it by an imprudent marriage ſhe thus forfeited her parents favour?"

"It was—ſhe formed a ſecret connection with a young foreigner whom accident introduced to her acquaintance at the Engliſh Ambaſſador's, during the abſence of my father, who had confided her to the care of a diſtant relation, and from the hour of its being diſcovered, ſhe was caſt off by the whole offended family."

"Good Heaven! and was that foreigner an Engliſhman?"

"Indeed," replied Madame d'Arzele, "I know not. His name was held in ſuch deteſtation in our houſe that it was never mentioned before me, and when this lamented event took place, I was yet only ſeven years old, and conſequently too young to be admitted into company, or entruſted with family affairs. As I grew up the mention of my poor Clarentine was equally forbidden—an impenetrable veil was thrown over her ſtory—her fate was never enquired into—her exiſtence, to all appearance, no more remembered!"

Clarentine, inexpreſſibly agitated during this whole converſation, acquainted with all

all the unhappy circumſtances relating to her mother's marriage, and petrified with amazement at a conformity of coincidencies ſo ſtriking and ſo ſingular, now, almoſt gaſping for breath, ſaid with the utmoſt emotion—

"I cannot be miſtaken—that ſiſter, whom you ſo tenderly lament—you ſo fondly loved, Clarentine de Céligni was—my mother!"

Madame d'Arzele, ſtarting at theſe words, with a look of wild aſtoniſhment; of mixed doubt, irreſolution, and extacy, gazed ſome moments at the weeping Clarentine, without having power to ſpeak, and then exclaimed—

"Are you then—Oh, God! is it poſſible? Are *you*, deareſt girl, the daughter of Clarentine de Céligni? of that ſiſter, that friend, whom no diſparity of age, no time, no abſence could ever eraſe from my remembrance, or my heart? Can it be true? Oh ſpeak; haſten to aſſure me once again, that I may, indeed, give credit to ſuch a tale of joy!"

Clarentine, too deeply affected to be capable of making any anſwer, threw herſelf into her arms with a look that ſo expreſſively

preſſively ſeemed to implore her belief, her acknowledgment and love, that giving way to all the fulneſs of her heart, Madame d'Arzele preſſed her with tranſport to her boſom, and bathed her face with tears of the moſt affectionate ſenſibility and rapture.

The relation now followed of Clarentine's whole hiſtory, from the hour of her arrival in England, to the preſent moment. The premature death of her unhappy ſiſter, which till this explanation, Madame d'Arzele had but a vague apprehenſion of, filled them both during its recital with grief and ſadneſs, and moſt painfully embittered the firſt ſenſations of delight, occaſioned by a diſcovery ſo intereſting and ſo unexpected. The ſequel of Clarentine's recital, however, by degrees effaced theſe melancholy impreſſions, and left at its concluſion no traces upon the mind, but thoſe of gratitude towards the friends, who, from her infancy, had ſo generouſly protected her.

Madame d'Arzele, when Clarentine had ended, embraced and thanked her repeatedly for her ſimple little narrative. Then adverting to the calamities that had driven her and her children from France,

" Till

"Till now," cried ſhe, "I could only lament them with bitterneſs and ſorrow. Methinks, however, this moment recompences me for every ſuffering I have endured! Oh, that my poor father, extinguiſhing his reſentment againſt the mother, in his love for her daughter, my ſweet, and amiable Clarentine, could have ſhared in my preſent tranſports!"

At that moment the Chevalier de Valcour, who had been reading in another room, entered. Madame d'Arzele aſſured of the intereſt he would take in ſuch a communication, inſtantly made him acquainted with the cauſe of that emotion their countenances ſtill ſo viſibly betrayed. He heard her with a degree of ſurpriſe ſcarcely inferior to that ſhe had herſelf experienced; and when ſhe ceaſed, expreſſed with the utmoſt warmth the joy he felt upon the occaſion, and congratulated them both upon a conſanguinity that would now add a ſtronger tie than ever to the friendſhip they had already formed.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

"A la naive franchiſe, aux graces de l'Infance
Elle joint de la jeuneſſe les talents, l'Innocence;
Belle ſans le ſavoir la plus douce candeur,
Regne dans ſes regards, ainſi que dans ſon coeur."
RECUEIL DE POESIES ANONYME.

SEVERAL months now elapſed in ſo calm and peaceful a manner, that nothing of any importance ſeemed to mark their progreſs. All that occurred during that period was the promotion of Frederick Delmington, at the age of nineteen, to a lieutenancy, by the intereſt and interference of Lord Welwyn, and the riſe of William Somerſet to the rank of poſt-captain.

Meanwhile, Sir Edgar, removed to Oxford, and more rarely ſeen at home than

ever, was become, during the vacations, a diſtinguiſhed favorite with, and a frequent viſitor at Lord Welwyn's. Alarmed at the progreſs of his attachment, and afraid to truſt himſelf in the ſociety of Clarentine, whoſe powers of attraction every day encreaſed, he reſolutely denied himſelf ſo dangerous an indulgence, and glad of any excuſe to ſhun her, always eagerly accepted the invitations Lord Welwyn honoured him with.

Lady Julia commonly choſe the time of his reſidence at her father's to pay a viſit at Delmington Houſe, Lord Welwyn then having a companion, and being leſs reluctantly induced to part with her.

Once, however, on the very day of Sir Edgar's arrival at the park, being ſeized with ſome ſlight illneſs, ſhe ſent an apology to Lady Delmington for deferring her promiſed viſit, and ended her note with a requeſt to ſee Clarentine immediately, for whom ſhe ſent the carriage.

Lady Delmington on this occaſion was extremely perplexed how to act. To deny Clarentine the permiſſion of going, at the time of all others, when her friend's indiſpoſition rendered her company moſt

deſirable

deſirable to her, ſhe thought might appear capricious and unkind, eſpecially, as ſhe had been in habits of ſo readily and frequently allowing her that indulgence. Yet, when after an abſence of three months, when Edgar was at the houſe, to ſend her to it, without any companion, Lady Julia ill, and no other woman in the family, ſeemed to be abſolutely throwing her in his way, and voluntarily reviving all the terrors ſhe had formerly endured on their account. Mrs. Harrington too was hourly expected. What would be her indignation, when ſhe heard that ſuch was the imprudent confidence with which ſhe truſted them together, fearleſs of obſervation, and relieved from all conſtraint?

"No," cried Lady Delmington, "I muſt not ſuffer it; Clarentine muſt remain, and, in her ſtead, one of my own girls ſhall haſten to Lady Julia."

She then inſtantly wrote to her Ladyſhip, to inform her that Emma, not being quite well (and ſuch, in fact, was the caſe) Clarentine, who was more uſed to her than any body, could not at that moment be ſpared; but that if ſhe wiſhed it, either

Harriet,

Harriet or Sophia ſhould be ſent to her in the evening.

Lady Julia, to whom it was almoſt indifferent which ſhe received, ſent back a verbal meſſage to ſay ſhe ſhould be happy to ſee *either* or *both* the Miſs Delmingtons as ſoon as it was convenient.

Accordingly, Sophia, who of the two flattered herſelf, and with reaſon, that ſhe was preferred, went to her that very evening. She ſtaid about a week, and then came back with her convaleſcent friend.

Anxious to communicate all ſhe had obſerved during her viſit, and habitually inclined to be more confidential with Clarentine than with any one elſe, Sophia ran into her room the moment ſhe arrived, and throwing herſelf into a chair, thus began—

"My dear Clarentine, I have a million of things to tell you; come, ſit down, and hear me attentively."

"I will," cried Clarentine, laughing—"Now, therefore, ſpeak."

"Well then, let me begin by informing you; that I have made *three extraordinary* diſcoveries, one relating to Lady Julia, the penſive and pathetic; the other

to Edgar, the *ci-devant* ſpirited and gay; and the third to *myſelf*, the madcap and the giddy."

"Admirably characterized all three!" ſaid Clarentine—"pray go on."

"You muſt know then, that with regard to Lady Julia," reſumed Sophia, "whom, of courſe, I ſhall ſpeak of firſt, I have found out ſhe is in love."

"In love!—and with whom?"

"With that identical *ci-devant* I juſt mentioned. Whilſt I was with her, ſhe betrayed herſelf a thouſand different ways. To enumerate all the various ſymptoms, would be never ending: ſymptom the firſt however was, that ſhe bluſhed whenever he looked at her; yet, Heaven knows! his looks were not very ſignificant! Symptom the ſecond, ſhe ſighed whenever he left her, if but for a moment: ſymptom the third, ſhe faltered whenever he addreſſed her, and yet hated to be addreſſed by any other. Now, all theſe intelligible ſymptoms were ſo viſible, that I ſhould by no means be ſurpriſed, if Edgar underſtood them as well as I do, and had clearly penetrated her ſentiments."

"If

"If they are ſuch as he wiſhed to excite," anſwered Clarentine, "it is moſt probable he has. But now Sophia, tell me what diſcovery you have made concerning *yourſelf*."

Sophia laughed, heſitated a moment, looked very arch, and then ſaid—"You have a thouſand times more common ſenſe than I have, Clarentine, and therefore I intruſt you with this important ſecret; but you muſt promiſe me not to put on your *grand ſerieux*, not to *ſermonize* me. I allow you to laugh as much as you pleaſe; all I require is, that you do not ſcold me."

"I *ſhall* ſcold you, indeed," cried Clarentine, "if you keep me thus long in ſuſpence. Confeſs your ſins at once, good girl, and if I can, I will give you immediate abſolution."

Sophia ſtill remained irreſolute ſome minutes—changed colour—walked about the room with an air of the moſt comic perplexity, and then, ſummoning all her courage, and ſpeaking very quick, ſhe ſaid—"During my late viſit, it happened, for my ſins, that your odious Chevalier de Valcour found ſome pretext to come to the houſe almoſt every day. At one time

it was with a book he had borrowed; at another, with a note from his ſiſter; the day after, with thanks, for ſome little preſent that had been ſent them; *enfin*, he had always the art of being well received when he arrived, and the pleaſure of being viſibly regretted when he departed. Meanwhile, what was to become of *me?* Often left whole hours *tete-à tete* with him; whilſt Lady Julia was playing the Phillis with *her* Corydon, and my Lord was ſhut up in his ſtudy, how was I to reſiſt the prevalence of example, and ſhew myſelf wiſer than my neighbour? In good truth, I know not, for—I did not even try; but truſting to chance for its eſcape from infection, I e'en left my heart to its own guidance, and before the week was at an end, found I had irrecoverably loſt it!"

Here Clarentine, who had with difficulty preſerved her gravity ſo long, gave way to all the riſibility this account was calculated to excite.

"Ah, my poor Sophia!" exclaimed ſhe, "this *odious* Chevalier, I am afraid, was much more *ſignificant* in *his* glances, than your inſenſible brother!"

"Not

"Not at all," anſwered Sophia, eagerly, "the worſt of the buſineſs is, that the wretch, though he ſeemed *diverted* by the ſtrange things I ſaid to him, by my *bruſqueries*, and caprices, never loſt his inſupportable good-humour a moment, but uſed to laugh at me as people do at an entertaining, ſpoilt child; call me always, *la jolie Sauvage*; and treat me with ſuch an humiliating ſort of indulgence, that more than once, I felt tempted to fly at his face, and demand ſatisfaction for ſuch inſults."

"O, come," cried Clarentine, "if you can talk thus gaily of your lover's indifference, I begin to have ſome hopes of your ſpeedy recovery."

"As for that," returned Sophia, "I put but a feeble dependance upon my gaiety, for I do not believe it will ever be in the power of any ſentiment of this kind to bereave me of it for an inſtant—yet the ſentiment may ſtill exiſt, and though not with the ſame ſolemnity it would in a ſentimental Lady Julia, may ſtill, at times, torment me. If I could, however, but for one moment, ſucceed in putting the Chevalier into a *ſerious paſſion*; make him very fretful, very comfortleſs,

I think I ſhould be happy; ſince the next beſt thing to being *beloved*, in my opinion, is being *feared*."

"Being *hated* you mean. But my dear girl, as I foreſee this ſubject might prove inexhauſtible if purſued, and we may ſoon be ſummoned to dinner, try whether for a moment you cannot forget your *ingrate*, to acquaint me with the *third* diſcovery you talked of."

"Ah, true; I was very near forgetting it. Know then, my dear Clarentine, that I have one concern that affects me infinitely more than all the indifference of my provoking favorite. Poor Edgar, I ſuſpect, has got into debt at Oxford; the terror he ſhews whenever any letters are brought to him; the agitation with which he reads them; the diſappearance, in Frederick's ſtyle, of his watch, which, during the whole time I was at Welwyn Park, I never ſaw him wear; and more than all, the continual anxiety obſervable in his countenance, incline me to think I cannot be miſtaken. Yeſterday, I queſtioned him about the watch; at firſt, he anſwered me with embarraſſment and confuſion, but on my preſſing him ſtill cloſer, became quite

quite angry, and haſtily left the room. He is new to all this yet; but if he begins ſo early, habit, I fear, will ſoon familiarize him to the uneaſineſs he now feels."

"O, be more merciful, Sophia!" cried Clarentine, warmly. "If he *is* in debt, this, I am ſure, is the firſt time, and that very agitation you remarked in him, ought to convince you it will be the laſt. I pity him, with my whole heart, and wiſh moſt ſincerely that I knew how to aſſiſt him. Conceal your ſuſpicions from your mother, and let us queſtion Mr. Aukland upon the ſubject; he muſt know ſomething of the truth."

"We will walk down to his houſe this evening," ſaid Sophia, "and if he is at home, I will undertake to draw the whole ſecret from him. That this debt is formidable, I can have but little doubt, ſince ample as is Edgar's allowance, it is not a trifling ſum that could diſtreſs him thus."

Being now called to dinner, the ſubject was dropped, and they both hurried down.

Their meal over, Clarentine, whilſt preparing to ſet out for Mr. Aukland's, ſuddenly recollected the pocket-book, William Somerſet, near four years before, had put into her hands. Though ſo conſiderable an interval had elapſed ſince ſhe had received it, ſo adequate to all her ſimple wants was the little allowance furniſhed her by Lady Delmington, that ſhe had almoſt forgot ſhe poſſeſſed it, and had not once applied to its contents.

"Now is the time," cried ſhe, as ſhe opened her deſk, "to have recourſe to this ſum. Mr. Somerſet will applaud ſuch a uſe of his bounty, and poor Edgar, perhaps, may be benefited by it materially."

She now took out the pocket book, and unclaſping it with a beating heart, began to examine the notes it encloſed. They were three in number of 10l. each. Clarentine, delighted and ſurpriſed at her own riches, determined inſtantly to appropriate the whole to Edgar's uſe, if ſhe found him ſufficiently involved to require it.

This to her who ſo little knew the value of money; who had never till this moment,

ment, though now arrived at the age of ſeventeen, experienced the want of it, either for herſelf or her friends, Madame d'Arzele being, by the liberality of Lord Welwyn, amply provided with every neceſſary and comfort, was no very great ſacrifice. She lived too much out of the world to be tempted to ſpend much in the vanity of dreſs; ſhe ſaw too little of that extreme poverty in the neighbouring villages, which large towns continually exhibit, to feel any ſcruple in ſpending it as her friendſhip for Edgar, and her gratitude to his family now directed; and ſhe thought too nobly of Lady Delmington to imagine that ſhe could ever be taught, by being exiled from her roof, to regret having made ſuch a diſpoſal of it.

Impatient to announce her reſources and her deciſion to Sophia, ſhe ſafely depoſited her pocket-book in its uſual recefs, and haſtened down to the parlour in ſearch of her.

She found her in the hall, already prepared for their walk, and waiting anxiouſly for her.

Clarentine, excuſing herſelf for having detained her, took her under the arm, and

they left the houſe together. After proceeding ſome way a very quick pace, without allowing themſelves breath to ſpeak, they both, by mutual conſent, pauſed a moment, and inſenſibly renewed the converſation of the morning.

"You have not, I hope, mentioned your apprehenſions to Harriet yet?" ſaid Clarentine.

"No," anſwered Sophia, "nor do I intend acquainting her with them at all. Harriet is a very good girl; but ſhe is not extremely ſubject to compaſſionating the weakneſſes of her fellow-creatures; and though Edgar might not care much for her remonſtrances, I don't chuſe to render him liable to hearing them."

Clarentine then ſpoke of the treaſure ſhe poſſeſſed; and was proceeding to declare the uſe ſhe had reſolved to apply it to, when, haſtily interrupting her with a look of mixed incredulity and amazement, Sophia exclaimed, "Is it poſſible, Clarentine, you ſhould *really* have ſuch a ſum? Thirty pounds! Good Heaven! when did Mr. Somerſet give it you, and for what?"

Clarentine hesitated—the motive that had prompted the donation, the causeless fears that had occasioned it, she was unwilling to own, since those fears had, in the event, proved so totally unfounded, and might lead Sophia on hearing them so justly to accuse Somerset of illiberality and distrust. After a moment's reflection, she therefore answered—

"He gave it me to dispose of when I grew older either in acts of charity, or in any other way I chose. Hitherto the objects that have fallen under my notice have been so few, your excellent mother so generously relieves all she hears of, and so abundantly supplies me with every necessary, that I have had no temptation to break into the original sum, and shall therefore give it up, without one moment's regret, to your poor brother, if I find he requires it. Never, my dear Sophia, must he suspect the hand, however, that offers it; never must the rest of your family hear of the transaction. Promise me on your word of honour, solemnly promise me, never to mention it."

"I will make no such promise," cried Sophia, "it would shock me to think that

money you can ſo generouſly part with ſhould be laviſhed on an unthinking prodigal like Edgar!"

"O talk not thus unkindly of him!" cried Clarentine; "ſay not that you lament ſuch a diſpoſal of this ſum, ſince, if in thus beſtowing it, I can preſerve him from the neceſſity of revealing his diſtreſſes to his mother, I ſhall think it but an act of duty, a retribution, due in juſtice from me to his family."

They were now arrived at Mr. Aukland's gate; Sophia rang, and the maid who admitted them ſhewed them into a parlour, where alone, and pacing the room with great agitation, they perceived Sir Edgar—

Clarentine extremely ſurprized—diſconcerted in all her meaſures, and at a loſs how to account for her viſit, ſtarted back with a look of conſciouſneſs, and embarraſſment, and then ſtood ſilently regarding Sophia, without knowing whether to advance or retreat.

Meanwhile Sir Edgar, eagerly approaching, ſeized her hand, and in a voice that betrayed the utmoſt emotion ſaid—

"Whence

"Whence comes my deareſt Clarentine? To whom this unuſual viſit."

Clarentine changed colour, and faintly replied, "We came to conſult with Mr. Aukland, to aſk him ſome queſtions. Pray is he at home?"

"No, but he is expected every moment. Sit down my Clarentine, you look hurried, you are out of breath; what is it that has diſturbed you thus?"

"How apt we are," ſaid Sophia archly, "to attribute to others the ſame ſenſations we are conſcious of feeling ourſelves. Clarentine looks the image of tranquillity, Edgar, compared to *you!*"

Edgar, extremely diſconcerted, turned away without ſpeaking and walked to the window. A ſilence of ſome minutes ſucceeded, during which Clarentine obſerved him with concern, Sophia with curioſity. At length the former riſing and following him, ſaid with that innocent familiarity, and undiſguiſed affection ſhe was wont from her infancy to addreſs him, "you are unhappy, my dear Edgar; you ſeem depreſſed and melancholy; tell me, as to one of your oldeſt, and your

trueſt

trueſt friends, tell me what occaſions this. Are you ill?"

In anſwer to this enquiry, Edgar ſhook his head, and without venturing to look round, leaned his forehead againſt the frame of the window, and waved his hand for her to leave him. Clarentine, diſtreſſed and hurt by this behaviour, now reſumed, in a tone of mixed ſorrow and reproach—"Is this kind, Edgar? Is this friendly? Why will you not anſwer me? What is it you fear? Remonſtrance? I have neither diſpoſition nor authority to utter any. Breach of truſt? I pledge to you my honour never to betray you. Then be ſincere, *dear* Edgar, and convince me by repoſing ſome confidence in me, that I have not wholly forfeited the affection you formerly profeſſed for me."

"Oh, what is it you aſk?" at length exclaimed he abruptly turning to her, "what is it you would know? I cannot, Clarentine, I cannot make the humiliating confeſſion? Spare me, deareſt girl, and queſtion me no more."

"Bleſs me, Edgar," exclaimed Sophia, "if you are ſo tragical, you'll lead us to

ſuſpect

ſuſpect I know not what! Come let me help you out, and by *gueſſing* at your ſecret, endeavouring to ſpare you the mortification of revealing it. Look at me a moment; look at me well, and then tell me, whether all theſe qualms and agitations do not ariſe from your having contracted ſome fooliſh debt?—See Clarentine, he colours! my life for it, I am right!"

Edgar was ſilent a moment, and then in a low voice anſwered, "you are indeed, Sophia!"

"*C'eſt ce qu'on appelle parler, cela!*" cried ſhe, "you are a good creature now, and I feel half inclined to forgive you; but you muſt tell us firſt, how you incurred this debt, and to what it amounts."

"It amounts," anſwered he, ſpeaking very quick, and averting his eyes, "to 200l. and I incurred it at play!"

At the mention of ſuch a ſum Clarentine and Sophia turning pale, ſtarted, and in ſilent conſternation gazed at each other a conſiderable time. At length Sophia recovering firſt, ſaid—

"And what Sir, may I aſk, is your plan? Whom do you mean to apply to?"

"Not

"Not to my mother," anſwered he, "for I have already drawn upon her to a large amount, and far exceeded the ſtipend ſhe allotted me. Not to Mrs. Harrington, for to hope from her any thing but reproach and inſult would be madneſs. Not to my college friends, for with them my credit is exhauſted."

"Good God!" interrupted Sophia with quickneſs, "are your debts then ſo numerous? Do you owe even more than this 200l?"

"I owe," ſaid he, with affected calmneſs, "more than the whole amount of my next half year's allowance, that is to ſay, more than 250l. will pay!"

"Independant of this play-debt?"

"Yes, utterly?"

"Heaven and earth!" exclaimed the indignant Sophia, "what unheard-of extravagance! 450l. in leſs than a year! I could not have believed you capable of ſuch folly, to call it by no worſe an appellation!'

"Huſh, huſh, Sophia;" cried Clarentine mildly, "this was not the condition upon which we ſought his confidence, the

the evil is paſt; and ſince we cannot remedy, our part is not to blame."

"Ah! deareſt Clarentine!" exclaimed Edgar, extremely ſoftened, "little as I deſerve it, how grateful do I feel for this lenity! you are the ſweeteſt, as you have ever been the moſt beloved of friends! How is it, that although thinking and acting uniformly right yourſelf, you retain an indulgence ſo conſiderate, a pity ſo conſolitary for the errors of others. I was almoſt in a ſtate of deſperation till you arrived; but *your* voice, *your* looks have calmed, have ſoothed me, and once more reſtored me to reaſon."

"If ſuch is her power over you," cried Sophia, affecting a tone of ſarcaſm, though her countenance bore viſible teſtimony to the gentler emotions this ſpeech had excited, "it had been fortunate for you, had ſhe rather been at hand to prevent the *loſs* of your reaſon, than to haſten its *reſtoration*; but tell me, which of theſe horrible debts is moſt preſſing?"

"That I incurred at play," anſwered he, "there my honour is at ſtake—my word the only bond, and not to pay it imme-

immediately, would be to disgrace myself eternally."

"Very likely; but *how* are you to pay it? Had you any purpose in coming hither? Any hopes from Mr. Aukland?"

"Yes—I meant to confess to him the whole affair; to entreat his advice and assistance, and to persuade him, if possible, to lend me half the sum I have the most immediate necessity for."

"And the other half? How is that to be procured?"

"Do not ask me," replied Edgar, colouring, "be content to know I have resources that will enable me to raise——

"I understand you," interrupted Sophia, "resources, Edgar, you ought to blush at being driven to have recourse to. Your watch I know is gone;—so I suppose are your books?"

Edgar was beginning to answer, when, driving past the door in her way to Delmington House, where she had been some days expected, he saw Mrs. Harrington, and instantly retreating from the window, drawing Clarentine away at the same moment—

"O,

"O, go, go," he exclaimed, "let her not ſee you here with me—let her not tell my mother where you have been! Go home immediately, I conjure you."

"Lady Delmington," ſaid Clarentine, amazed at his earneſtneſs, "knows where we are; we have nothing to fear."

"She knew not that *I* ſhould be here," returned Edgar with encreaſed perturbation. "She muſt not hear of it! Go, I beſeech you, and as ſoon as I have ſpoken to Mr. Auckland I will haſten back to Welwyn."

He then opened the parlour door, ſhook hands with them as they paſſed, and hurried them away.

CHAP. II.

CLARENTINE and Sophia arrived at their own door about a quarter of an hour after Mrs. Harrington had alighted, having, more from a vague idea of complying with Edgar's injunctions than from any

any perſonal apprehenſions, hurried extremely the whole way. In the hall they debated ſome time between themſelves whether immediately to join the family in the parlour, or wait till they were ſummoned to tea. At length, however, they agreed to go in, and compoſing their features as well as they could, opened the door and advanced.

Lady Julia, brightening up at their approach, nodded good-humouredly to Clarentine, and holding out her hand to her, ſaid—

"Where have you been all this afternoon, my dear girl?"

"At Mr. Aukland's," anſwered Clarentine, curteſying as ſhe ſpoke to Mrs. Harrington, who, without riſing, only returned her civility by a ſtiff bow.

"Was he at home?" ſaid Lady Delmington.

"No, madam; but hearing he was expected in every moment, we ſat down and waited for him, in vain, till now."

"Did not I," ſaid Mrs. Harrington, "ſee you ſtanding at the window as I drove by?"

"Yes, madam, I believe you did."

"And

"And who was there with you?"

Clarentine, innocent as ſhe was, and ready as ſhe would have been, but for Edgar's myſterious caution, to anſwer unheſitatingly this enquiry, bluſhed deeply as it was uttered, and croſſing the room as ſhe ſpoke, upon pretence of putting away her cloak, replied in an ill aſſured voice—

"It was Sir Edgar Delmington you ſaw, I fancy, madam."

"My ſon?" cried Lady Delmington, with quickneſs—"and what led him to Mr. Aukland's at ſo unuſual an hour?"

Clarentine, ill-verſed in diſſimulation, yet but too well aware of its neceſſity in this caſe, affected to be ſtill buſied in folding up her gloves and cloak at the other end of the room, the better to conceal her embarraſſment, and keeping as cloſe to the truth as ſhe could, anſwered—

"He told us he had ſome buſineſs he wiſhed to conſult Mr Auckland upon."

"And you ladies ſtaid," ſaid Mrs. Harrington drily, "during the conſultation, to aſſiſt them by your wiſdom, and experience?"

"No,

"No Madam," cried Sophia, attempting to ſpeak with gaiety, "we were obliged unfortunately to haſten away before Mr. Aukland returned!"

"In my opinion," ſaid Mrs. Harrington, aſſuming a graver look, "you had no buſineſs to remain a moment, after you found Mr. Aukland was out."

"Dear Ma'am," cried Sophia, "what harm could there be in our ſitting to talk a few minutes with Edgar? We had not —that is, Clarentine had not ſeen him, theſe ten days."

To this Mrs. Harrington, though ſhe looked extremely diſcontented, did not think proper before Lady Julia to make any reply, and therefore to the great joy of the two friends, the ſubject was dropped.

Juſt as they were ſitting down to ſupper, a ſervant entered with a note for Sophia. Her mother aſking who it came from, ſhe ſaid from Edgar, and put it into her pocket.

"Don't you read it directly?" ſaid Lady Julia—

"No," anſwered Sophia, "it can contain nothing of any moment."

"Read

"Read it notwithſtanding," ſaid Lady Delmington, "perhaps he wiſhes to have ſomething ſent to him."

Sophia drew a candle near her, opened it, and found in it theſe words—

TO MISS S. DELMINGTON.

"All is well my dear Sophia. Mr. Aukland made no difficulty in ſupplying me. He has promiſed inviolable ſecrecy, Do not you, by any imprudence, betray me. Adieu, love to dear Clarentine, and am yours in great haſte, E. D.

"No queſtions, I hope, were aſked after you got home? I ſhall breakfaſt with you to morrow."

"Well," ſaid Lady Delmington, when ſhe had done reading, "what does he ſay to you?"

"That he ſhall breakfaſt here in the morning," anſwered Sophia.

"He was not wont," ſaid Lady Delmington ſmiling, "to be ſo formal as to give notice of ſuch an intention the day before"

"Neither," ſaid Sophia, anxious, by giving ſome plauſible reaſon for his conduct, to preclude all further enquiries,

"was

"was he wont to be ſo great a ſtranger in his own family. It is now many months, I believe, ſince he partook any meal with us."

"I ſhould be loth to imagine," ſaid Lady Delmington, "that he therefore conſidered, and meant in future to treat us, as abſolute ſtrangers."

"I am ſure," ſaid Lady Julia, "at the houſe he is now in, he will not, at leaſt, be encouraged in ſuch ſentiments."

"I am apt conſequently to ſuſpect," ſaid Mrs. Harrington, ſtedfaſtly regarding Sophia, whilſt ſhe ſpoke, "that Sir Edgar's note contained intelligence far more intereſting than was imparted to us."

Sophia turned pale at this inſinuation, and for a few minutes, a general ſilence enſued. Lady Delmington was the firſt to break it.

"Secrecy, I have often heard," cried ſhe, "always implies ſome wrong. This perhaps, at times may be true: but, as I have never been in the habit of extorting my children's confidence by authoritative means, and as I am perſuaded there may frequently, between an affectionate brother

ther and ſiſter, be little private communications intereſting only to themſelves, and in their own nature perfectly harmleſs, I have made it a rule never to interfere upon theſe occaſions, when by any act of indiſcretion they put themſelves in danger of being betrayed."

There was a liberality, a kindneſs in this ſpeech that immediately, and almoſt unconſciouſly impoſed ſilence upon Mrs. Harrington, reſtored Sophia to her uſual chearfulneſs, and afforded a moſt welcome relief to poor Clarentine, who from the beginning of the converſation had ſat the picture of terror, not daring to raiſe her eyes, changing colour every minute, and trembling leſt Sophia, by any unguarded expreſſion, ſhould excite in the mind of her mother a ſuſpicion of the real truth.

Early the next morning, Sophia, with Edgar's note in her hand, was at Clarentine's door: after reading it to her—

"I am come," cried ſhe, "to diſſuade you finally, my dear girl, from the generous deſign you yeſterday mentioned to me. The gift you propoſed beſtowing upon this prodigal brother of mine, enor-

mous as, from ſo young a giver, it would ſeem, could in fact prove of very little, if *any*, uſe to him. He acknowledges, in addition to this play debt, to have others of a yet more conſiderable amount. Can you diſcharge *them?* And if you could, would it not be encouraging his extravagance? O Clarentine, retain this money for ſome nobler uſe, and beſtow it not as a recompenſe for miſconduct.

"No," cried Clarentine, "I had a better purpoſe to anſwer when I talked of beſtowing it on your brother: I wiſhed to ſave him from public ſhame, to preſerve him from the hardening effects of open diſgrace. Should he once overcome the dread he now feels of reproach and diſcovery, he is loſt for ever! This debt paid, the others, I thought, he might diſcharge by degrees; he ſays himſelf *they* are not ſo preſſing; a little firmneſs, economy, and ſelf-denial, would ſoon extricate him wholly."

"I wiſh it might prove ſo," ſaid Sophia; "though I greatly fear, the more eaſy he finds it to gain credit, the leſs ſcrupulous he will become."

Clarentine

Clarentine haſtily interrupted her: "I have no fears," cried ſhe with earneſtneſs; "Edgar's principles are well known to me; they are naturally thoſe of rectitude and honour; he has a feeling and generous diſpoſition; and though his paſſions may be ſtrong, and his conduct may for a while have been faulty, his *head*, and not his *heart* has been to blame. As a proof of this you find how ſenſible he is to the paſt kindneſs of your mother; how unwilling to take further advantage of that kindneſs; and how ready, ſooner than diſtreſs her by freſh applications, to part with all his valuables even at the riſk of immediate detection. My deareſt Sophia, ſuffer me then ſtill to indulge the hope that I may be uſeful to him; and ſince you will not lend me that aſſiſtance I had ventured to expect from you, at leaſt, give me your word, not to reveal to any other the converſations we have had upon the ſubject."

"I told you before, my beſt Clarentine," cried Sophia, "and I now repeat what I then ſaid, I would not for the univerſe make any ſuch promiſe. The moment I have reaſon to ſuſpect you of

having been guilty of ſo great a piece of folly, I openly confeſs the whole affair to my mother, and involve Edgar, as well as you, in a general diſcovery. Do not therefore accuſe me of unkindneſs to him, or breach of truſt with regard to you. To do *him* a *real* ſervice, to oblige *you* in a *rational* way, I would ſcarcely heſitate at any thing: but mad as I ſometimes am, I will never contribute towards carrying on an affair, for which I ſhould ſo deſervedly merit a cell in Bedlam for life. To prevent all poſſibility conſequently of your perſiſting in this deſign, I now ſolemnly declare to you, that unleſs you give me your word of honour to drop the whole ſcheme, I will this very morning make Edgar acquainted with it, on purpoſe to put him upon his guard againſt receiving any money that may come to him through an unknown channel."

The ſerioufneſs and earneſtneſs with which this was uttered terrified Clarentine, who, after vainly endeavouring to make Sophia retract her alarming threat, promiſed to think no more of the buſineſs, but to let matters take their own courſe,

courſe, without interfering in their arrangement in any way whatever.

At nine o'clock Sir Edgar, according to his appointment, arrived. He looked more chearful than he had done for ſome time, yet ſtill at intervals appeared abſent and thoughtful. Clarentine almoſt rejoiced to obſerve it, ſince it at once evinced ſenſibility, and contrition. She ſought not however to ſpeak to him in private, and adviſed Sophia to obſerve the ſame caution.

At an early hour he ordered his horſe, and rode back to Welwyn.

Lady Julia, as ſoon as he was gone, threw aſide her work, and invited Clarentine to walk with her in the garden.

After converſing ſome time upon general ſubjects, Clarentine obſerving that Lady Julia liſtened to, and anſwered her with an air of inattention that proved ſhe ſcarcely knew one ſyllable ſhe had been ſaying, ſuddenly ſtopped, and looking at her with a ſmile, ſaid—

"Pray Lady, Julia, why did you wiſh for a companion during your walk?"

"Why?" repeated Julia, ſurpriſed at the enquiry, "Becauſe I hate to wander

about alone, and always rejoice when I can find an opportunity of converſing with you without reſtraint."

"Of *meditating* with me, you mean," cried Clarentine, "ſince ſurely where there are only two, and where *one* only of thoſe two utters a ſingle word, the term *converſation* cannot with any propriety be applied to the *triſte*, and unſupported efforts of that ſolitary ſpeaker."

Lady Julia coloured, and preſſing Clarentine's hand, replied—

"I acknowledge, dear girl, the juſtice of your reproof. My ſilence and ſtupidity well deſerved it, and I aſk a thouſand pardons for having called it forth. The truth is," continued ſhe, not ſuffering Clarentine, who, hurt at her ſerioufneſs would have interrupted her, "my mind is wholly employed in reflecting upon the contents of a letter I received this morning from my father. Can you keep a ſecret Clarentine? If you can, I will tell you what he ſays to me."

"Try me," ſaid Clarentine, ſmiling, "and I hope you will have no cauſe to accuſe me of indiſcretion."

Lady

"Lady Julia ſtood ſuſpended a moment, looked confuſed, and irreſolute: but on Clarentine's urging her to proceed; at length went on—

"My father,—I would he had ſpared me ſo dangerous a confidence,—charmed with the rectitude of principles, the elegance of manners, the noble generoſity of character ſo conſpicuous in Sir Edgar Delmington, has, he informs me, after conſulting his mother and family, entered into engagements with the former, which, when he comes of age, are to confirm me his for ever! The narrowneſs of Sir Edgar's fortune was with him no impediment, mine being by the death my poor brother conſiderable; and Mrs. Harrington having, I underſtand, in conſideration of this alliance, declared ſhe will leave us, at her death, all ſhe poſſeſſes."

Clarentine, who had attended to this communication with ſparkling eyes, and looks that denoted the moſt ſenſible delight, now affectionately embraced Lady Julia, and exclaimed—

"You have long permitted me, deareſt Lady Julia, to call you by the name of

friend, to treat you with the freedom and familiarity of an equal. Our Edgar, you know, is as dear to me as a brother. This union, the moſt deſirable in every reſpect that could take place, gives me through him an additional title to your regard; makes me *your* ſiſter, as well as *his*, and leaves me without a wiſh, except for your mutual and laſting happineſs."

"Alas! my Clarentine," cried Lady Julia, ſhaking her head, "you little ſuſpect how much reaſon I have to be averſe to this, apparently, unobjectionable marriage; to dread it even, and lament it ever was propoſed. Sir Edgar has been informed of my father's future intentions in his behalf, yet far from appearing deſirous of profiting by them, or of making himſelf any intereſt in my heart, he behaves to me with a degree of indifference, of negligence, the moſt mortifying, and the moſt offenſive."

Clarentine, ſincerely grieved at this ſpeech, attempted however to diſguiſe the concern it gave her under an appearance of incredulity. With a look of aſſumed gaiety ſhe therefore replied—

"How

"How difficult all theſe lovers are to pleaſe! I really believe there is no paſſion makes the human heart ſo ſuſpicious, ſo perverſe! Poor Edgar little imagines he can have merited ſuch a reproach; yet were he to hear it, how flattering to him would it be! But tell me, Lady Julia, and tell me honeſtly, is it your *pride*, or your *affection* his ſuppoſed indifference wounds the deepeſt."

"You aſk me," replied Lady Julia, "more than I know how to anſwer. When he is preſent, all reſentment I find loſt in ſorrow; when abſent, reſentment, nearly unmixed with ſorrow, takes the lead."

"I underſtand this diſtinction," cried Clarentine, "and am now convinced you love him with all the tenderneſs that his thouſand excellent qualities deſerve. This conviction gives me more pleaſure than I can well expreſs. Edgar was formed for ſocial happineſs, for domeſtic enjoyments. He loves reading, delights in female ſociety, and is naturally of ſo affectionate a diſpoſition, that to have known him married to a woman who was

not truly ſenſible of all his worth, would have made me wretched."

"And yet Clarentine," reſumed Lady Julia, "whilſt he perſeveres in his preſent conduct; whilſt coldly ſubſcribing to his mother's plans without being anxious for their ſucceſs, he continues to treat me with ſuch careleſſneſs and apathy, my fixed determination is, never to become his wife. The renunciation, though it may perhaps be painful to my heart, will be grateful to my inſulted pride. I am ſure of my father's indulgent acquieſcence to this refuſal, when once he is convinced I am ſerious in deſiring it; and almoſt ſecure likewiſe of poſſeſſing, through *your* early leſſons, my deareſt Clarentine, ſufficient ſpirit to enable me to conquer my own regret, ſhould I feel any after the rejection becomes public. You firſt taught me to overcome the habitual indolence of my character, and infuſed into my mind that reſolution and firmneſs by which I hope to be ſupported."

"I ſhould be ſorry to believe," ſaid Clarentine gravely, "that I had been ſo wholly miſtaken in my notions of *firmneſs*, and *reſolution*, as to inſtill *irritability* and *petulance*

petulance in their place. Aſſure yourſelf, Lady Julia, I never meant to recommend ſuch ſubſtitutes; and grieved indeed ſhould I be, could I imagine that the ſentiments by which you are now actuated had originally been implanted by me. I am convinced you do Sir Edgar the greateſt injuſtice, when you conceive him capable of aſſenting to the views of his family upon motives ſo mercenary as thoſe of mere intereſt and ambition. He may not perhaps, I cannot bring myſelf, even when pleading for him, to flatter you, feel for you that romantic egree of paſſion you ſeem deſirous of inſpiring: but of this I am certain, he admires you extremely; he appeared ſenſibly touched by the relation that was given him of your kindneſs and benevolence towards Madame d'Arzele, and her little family; he reveres and loves your father more than any man he knows, and has the ſincereſt value for you. What more, in reaſon, dear, dear Lady Julia, would you wiſh?"

"Well, my deareſt Clarentine," anſwered Lady Julia, who although ſhe had been a little hurt at the beginning of this ſpeech, could not forbear ſmiling at its

concluſion, "I may have been wrong, I may have been unjuſt; in expiation therefore of theſe errors, accept my promiſe not to act with precipitation in this affair, not to ſuffer myſelf in future to be guided by pique, or *irritability*; but to wait patiently, without taking any ſteps in it whatever, the moment when Sir Edgar comes of age, and chuſes frankly to declare himſelf."

Clarentine, tranquillized by this aſſurance, then quitted her friend to ſet out on one of her accuſtomed morning viſits to the family at *Mont Repos*.

Madame d'Arzele was at this time involved in much domeſtic uneaſineſs. Her children, in the courſe of the winter, had all three been ſeized with the meaſles. The two youngeſt, at the end of a few weeks, happily recovered: but Eugenie, the eldeſt, had never, from that time, wholly regained her former ſtrength, and within the laſt month, particularly, had ſo cruelly alarmed her mother, by the languor and feveriſhneſs which conſtantly preyed upon her, and gradually undermined her whole conſtitution, that after conſulting with the phyſician to whom

whom Lord Welwyn, at the beginning of their illneſs, had recommended them, ſhe had, at laſt, determined, for a ſhort time, to try change of air, and remove to ſome little village nearer the ſea-coaſt. At the ſame moment, however, ſhe acknowleged with a forced ſmile, that her finances not being in a very flouriſhing condition, having reſolutely and conſtantly rejected all ſuch donations from Lord Welwyn as were wholly pecuniary, ſhe was under ſome difficulty with regard to the expences this little journey would unavoidably involve her in: "I expect a ſmall ſupply, however," continued ſhe more gaily, "next week from a friend in town, to whom I lately ſent ſome drawings of the Chevalier's, and ſome work of my own to diſpoſe of, and the inſtant that arrives, I hope to ſet out. He is now actually gone to Sidmouth, to look about in its vicinity for ſome cheap and eligible lodging for us; and when you entered, my deareſt Clarentine, I was writing to Lady Julia an account of my intention, and its motive."

Clarentine, affected by this candid ſtatement of her friend's embarraſsments,

and

and extremely desirous of exempting her from the painful necessity of deferring a plan, her maternal solicitude rendered her so anxious to accomplish, now besought her most earnestly to receive from her, in consideration of their near relationship, that assistance she had rejected from Lord Welwyn. A friend, she added, had enabled her by his liberality to make the offer; an offer, which, if upon condition Madame d'Arzele would honour her by accepting, she would accompany with a promise of attending her to Sidmouth, or if she could not immediately be spared, of following her thither, as soon as Lady Delmington gave her permission.—

"You will want, dearest Madam," continued she, "some one to support, to chear, to assist you in the task of attending upon your sick child; and who ought you sooner to chuse than her, who loving you with such affection, and feeling so deeply interested in all that concerns you, will take so much pleasure in the office?"

Madame d'Arzele listened to this truly friendly proposal with streaming eyes, and

and upon Clarentine's renewing her entreaties, at length, *in part*, accepted it. Rejoicing in her ſucceſs, and as prompt in executing, as in planning any purpoſe of benevolence, Clarentine then took leave, in order to haſten home, and ſolicit that approbation ſhe was ſo anxious to obtain,

CHAP. III.

IT was ſo late when Clarentine reached home, that on her entering the dining-room, ſhe found the whole family ready to ſit down to table. It was not, therefore, till evening ſhe had an opportunity of ſpeaking to her aunt upon the ſubject that now wholly engroſſed her.

Lady Delmington, but too ſenſible of the inveterate and hourly encreaſing prejudices Mrs. Harrington had conceived againſt her unoffending niece, and, conſequently, by no means ſorry to embrace

ſo

ſo good an opportunity of removing them from each other, made no difficulty in complying with Clarentine's requeſt.—She offered to furniſh her with a ſufficient ſupply of money for the journey, and propoſed paying regularly for her board during her abſence. To this, however, Clarentine, averſe to hoarding her little treaſure in ſecrecy any longer, warmly, but gratefully objected, acquainting her aunt, at the ſame time, with the generoſity of young Somerſet, and the uſe his noble gift was now deſtined to anſwer. Lady Delmington applauded her friendly purpoſe; expreſſed the kindeſt anxiety reſpecting the recovery of her little favourite, and encouraging her to haſten as much as poſſible ſo deſirable an expedition, left her, to rejoin Mrs. Harrington and Lady Julia.

At ten, a note arrived from Lord Welwyn, ſoliciting the pleaſure of ſeeing the whole family to dinner the next day. Lady Delmington, with the approbation of Mrs. Harrington, accepted the invitation, and wrote an anſwer to that effect, which ſhe ſent back by his Lordſhip's meſſenger.

The

The next day, however, Mrs. Harrington complaining of indiſpoſition, and feeling by no means inclined, either from habitual civility, or natural good-humour, to ſacrifice the ſlighteſt perſonal indulgence to the gratification of others, very bluntly declared — notwithſtanding ſhe therefore reduced her polite hoſteſs to the neceſſity of ſtaying at home herſelf, or of leaving one of her daughters behind—ſhe was determined to give up her engagement. The young people, upon this, well knowing how diſagreeable to Lady Delmington would be a whole day ſpent *tete-à-tete* with ſuch a companion, all offered to ſupply her place. She was too indulgent, however, to liſten to their entreaties; and conſequently, at the appointed hour, Lady Julia, Clarentine, and her two couſins, ſat out for Welwyn Park.

Among thoſe who formed a part of the company they were introduced to, was a Mr. Eltham, a nephew of Lord Welwyn's, juſt arrived from London. This young man, born to a ſplendid fortune, already emancipated from every ſpecies of controul, and now rendered by circumſtances,

ſtances, ſole heir to all his uncle's landed property, was as remarkable for the elegance of his figure as the fire and animation of his ever-dauntleſs countenance. Poſſeſſing all the boldneſs and intrepidity that conſcious independence and impunity can confer, he could vie, though yet ſcarcely more than two and twenty, with the oldeſt practitioners in extravagance, folly, and diſſipation. His manners were eaſy, gay, and careleſs; his converſation, when he wiſhed to pleaſe, ſpirited, and entertaining; and his underſtanding, however wild, and flighty, naturally quick, penetrating, and brilliant.

From the time Clarentine, who, unfortunately, was placed oppoſite to him, took her ſeat at table, he ſcarcely, for a moment, fixed his eyes on any other object. Her beauty, it was evident, had excited his utmoſt admiration; and the unaffected modeſty of her countenance, where no ſhame-faced baſhfulneſs appeared to deform the native ingenuouſneſs of its expreſſion; the elegant ſimplicity of her manners, and the graceful ſymmetry of her form—his utmoſt aſtoniſhment.

Who

Who ſhe could be—or how, in ſuch a ſecluded ſituation, ſhe had acquired ſo diſtinguiſhed a ſuperiority, it was not eaſy to imagine. When ſhe entered, being engaged in converſation with another gentleman, he had not heard her name, and therefore was yet doubtful whether ſhe formed a part of the Delmington family, or was only an occaſional viſitor at their houſe. Impatient to obtain fuller information, he ſeized the firſt opportunity, after ſhe had left the room with the other ladies, of queſtioning Sir Edgar upon the ſubject.

"Allow me to aſk, Sir," ſaid he, "whether that lady whom you ſat next at dinner was any relation of yours?"

Sir Edgar anſwered, that ſhe was.

"Is her name Delmington?"—"Yes, Sir."—"Does ſhe live with you?"—"Yes, Sir."—"Pray then is ſhe an orphan?"

Edgar never very tolerant of any thing that in the ſlighteſt degree bordered upon impertinence, and particularly provoked at being ſo freely interrogated reſpecting Clarentine, affected not to hear this laſt queſtion,

queſtion, but turned away, and addreſſed himſelf to his next neighbour.

Eltham, however, was not of a temper to be ſo eaſily diſcouraged. He now therefore openly applied to Lord Welwyn himſelf, and ſpeaking to him acroſs the table—

"I muſt beg, my Lord," cried he, "that you would indulge me with ſome account of the young lady who went laſt out of the room. Is it true, that ſhe has been buried all her life in the diſmal ſolitude of an old country manſion, unſeen, unknown, and doomed to pine in obſcurity and neglect?"

Lord Welwyn laughed. "The diſmal ſolitude," anſwered he, "of that old country manſion, you would, I believe, with ſuch a companion, be very happy to find yourſelf condemned to. You are miſtaken, however, if you ſuppoſe ſhe is either *neglected*, or *unknown*. Her goodneſs, her accompliſhments and beauty, have all rendered her an object of univerſal admiration; and I meet with no one who has ever converſed with her, who does not equally reſpect and love her."

"Ah,

"Ah, my Lord!" cried Eltham, "beware leſt you praiſe her with too much enthuſiaſm! that captivating, that bewitching face, requires not the aid of ſo eloquent a panegyriſt!"

"Her face," returned Lord Welwyn, "conſtitutes one of her leaſt perfections. She is chiefly to be valued for the qualities of her heart, the undeviating truth and rectitude of her character. She has ſpent much of her time here with my daughter, and given me the faireſt opportunity of ſtudying her diſpoſition, and appreciating her real worth! Invariably, and conſtantly has ſhe proved herſelf upright, and pure of intention; affectionate, and gentle of mind; fixed, and ſteady of principle!"

"Dear my lord," exclaimed Eltham, "that you would but take *my* eulogium in hand! You paint in ſuch glowing colours, that the vileſt ſubject might gain beauty from your touch."

"Wait," replied his Lordſhip, ſmiling, "till we are called to tea, and in preſence of the fair Clarentine, I will undertake the taſk."

"I diſtruſt

"I diſtruſt you a little, my Lord;" cried Eltham, "but will, however, abide by the conſequences, and accept the propoſal."

Soon after, the expected ſummons arrived, and the gentlemen all readily repaired to the drawing-room.

Clarentine on their entrance, was ſitting with Sophia at a window, in earneſt converſation. Lord Welwyn, followed by his nephew, went up to her, and addreſſing her with a good humoured ſmile—

"My dear young lady," ſaid he, "I am commiſſioned by this gentleman to renew his introduction to you; he fears that during the buſtle of the general preſentation that took place before dinner, you may have over-looked him, and much wiſhes to be more particularly made known to you. Are you, at this moment, at leiſure to attend to me?"

Clarentine half-laughing, bowed, and anſwered—

"Certainly, my lord."

"Why then," reſumed his Lordſhip, "George Eltham, Eſq. approach and hear your birth, parentage, and education

tion minutely diſcuſſed. He was born, Miſs Delmington, in the year 17—, of a father who, dying when he was only five years old, left him heir to an immenſe eſtate; at nine, he was ſent to Weſtminſter ſchool; at 17 to Oxford; three years after to the continent; and here he now ſtands, juſt returned from Italy, as finiſhed a coxcomb, and as compleat *a man of the world*, as I ever had the honour of being acquainted with. Moreover, till within this laſt twelvemonth, he was my ward, and claims the privilege of calling me uncle."

Eltham, at the concluſion of this *animated encomium*, felt, notwithſtanding all his effrontery, ſomething like embarraſſment. He attempted however to diſguiſe it under a forced laugh; and turning upon his heel, ſauntered towards the tea-table, and threw himſelf into a chair next Lady Julia.

Meanwhile, Clarentine and Sophia, extremely amuſed, both exclaimed the moment Lord Welwyn pauſed—

"A very inviting character indeed!"

"O, you know not yet," cried his Lordſhip, "half its merits! He can drink

drink hard, play high, fight deſperately. Every new face he ſees turns his head; every artful deſigner preys upon his fortune. In love and friendſhip he is equally a dupe! yet, with the ſame folly, few, perhaps, are poſſeſſed of ſo much openneſs and undiſguiſed extravagance as my graceleſs nephew. No hypocriſy, no diſſimulation covers the multitude of *his* ſins. They are all plain as the day, and public as the ſun!"

"My Lord," ſaid Sophia, "if he takes ſo little pains to conceal his faults, you have at leaſt the comfort of knowing he will ſeduce no one elſe into their practice. A character ſo thoughtleſs, muſt be incapable of employing any artifices in order to miſguide others."

"The contagion of example, my dear Sophia," replied his Lordſhip, "is perhaps quite as dangerous as the force of precept. Where there is youthful gaiety, ſpirit, generoſity, and courage, much will be overlooked, much pardoned, and I fear, much imitated. Thouſands are at firſt ſight dazzled by the brilliant exterior of an agreeable profligate, who never would have liſtened, for an inſtant, to

the fallacious logic of premeditated ſeduction. Eltham, ſetting aſide his morals, is the pleaſanteſt creature I ever knew, and has a *fund* of humour, originality and good-nature, rarely to be equalled. Can you imagine then, he wants either ſubtlety, or argument to miſlead?"

Here Clarentine being called upon by Lady Julia to aſſiſt her in making tea, the converſation was interrupted, and Lord Welwyn rejoined his other gueſts.

"Mr. Eltham," ſaid Lady Julia, as Clarentine advanced, "is extremely deſirous of knowing what you and my father have been talking about. He inſiſts upon it, *he* was the ſole ſubject of your long conference."

"Could Mr. Eltham," cried Clarentine, "indeed ſuſpect this, and yet want courage to liſten to what was ſaid of him."

"I ſuſtained the *firſt* ſhock ſo ill, "replied he, "that, to my ſhame be it acknowledged, I had not reſolution ſufficient to ſtand a ſecond."

"You were then taken by ſurpriſe," cried Lady Julia, laughing, "ſince otherwiſe, it would not have been found an eaſy matter to have diſconcerted *you* ſo

ſoon. A few animadverſions upon your conduct, or a brief recital of two or three of the charming anecdotes that have reached my father's ears reſpecting you, are not things of ſuch conſequence as to confound, or abaſh, a man of ſo much intrepidity. They are rather calculated to excite your vanity, as ſo many proofs of your gallantry and ſpirit."

"*Et tu, Brute?*" cried Eltham reproachfully, "upon my ſoul, this is not fair! Be content, my gentle Coz, with the inhuman mortifications I have already endured, and rather ſeek to re-eſtabliſh, than to ſink me yet lower, in your friend's good opinion."

Then turning to Clarentine, after a ſhort pauſe, "Will Miſs Delmington," ſaid he ſmiling, "permit me to aſk what ſhe conceives to be the actual meditations of the gentleman now ſtanding at that fartheſt window? His *eyes* ſeem to have found a pleaſant reſting place, but where may his *thoughts* be wandering?"

Clarentine, ſtarting at this ſpeech, raiſed her head, and looked towards the ſpot he had alluded to. There ſhe beheld Sir Edgar Delmington, leaning over the back

back of a chair, and ſtedfaſtly obſerving her with a ſtern and angry countenance; whilſt Sophia, unconſcious of the total diſregard with which he heard her, was gaily repeating the converſation that had juſt paſſed between Lord Welwyn and Clarentine.

Shocked, and aſtoniſhed, at being made an object of ſuch gloomy contemplation, Clarentine inſtantly aroſe, and haſtening towards him with the moſt anxious ſolicitude, beſought him to tell her what was the matter; why he looked ſo diſturbed; and why, when every one elſe was engaged in converſation, and ſeemed chearful and happy, he alone preſerved an air of ſuch thoughtfulneſs and diſcontent?

"You are not offended with any body, dear Edgar?" continued ſhe, "are you?"

"Gratified, and ſoothed by the kindneſs of her enquiries, yet aſhamed of acknowledging the real cauſe of his uneaſineſs, Sir Edgar's countenance immediately aſſumed a gentler expreſſion, and with a ſort of ſerious ſmile, he anſwered,

"No, my deareſt Clarentine, not now. You have reſtored me to good-humour."

"But what," cried ſhe, looking earneſtly at him, "originally diſturbed you?"

Without anſwering this queſtion, he extended to her his hand with an air, that ſeemed to ſolicit her forgiveneſs, but upon her reproachfully refuſing to accept it, affected an appearance of careleſs indifference, and leaving her with Sophia, walked up to Lord Welwyn, and the other gentlemen.

Clarentine looked after him as he croſſed the room, and ſhrugging her ſhoulders, exclaimed, "You have a ſtrange brother, my poor Sophia! He really becomes more unreaſonable and more irritable every day! It is impoſſible to depend upon him a moment, for whether grave or gay, his mirth and his ſadneſs ſeem equally to reſult from whim and caprice!"

"I cannot diſpute it," ſaid Sophia, "though I muſt honeſtly confeſs I underſtood not one word that either of you uttered. How came you to know he was angry? *I* did not even ſuſpect it."

"You did not look at him then," ſaid Clarentine.

"No,

"No, I was too buſily engaged in telling my own ſtory, to watch, very narrowly, every change of his countenance. Beſides, I always think it time enough to know that people are angry when they tell me ſo, and never take pains to find it out by their looks. What they *ſay* is all that concerns me; what they *think* it is ſeldom worth our while to inveſtigate."

Clarentine agreed to the truth of this, but to account for her too-apparent readineſs in making ſuch diſcoveries, repeated to her Mr. Eltham's ſarcaſtic obſervation, as having firſt directed her attention towards Sir Edgar; and ended, by declaring with ſome warmth, that ſhe was ſincerely rejoiced at the proſpect ſhe had of quitting Delmington for a ſhort time, ſince, whilſt Mrs. Harrington reſided there, and Edgar was ſo inexplicably gloomy, and unlike his former ſelf, ſhe had loſt all hope of enjoying any degree of happineſs or comfort.

Before Sophia, who ſeemed much hurt by this ſpeech, had time to anſwer it, Lady Julia ſent Mr. Eltham to ſummon them both to the card table. Clarentine, very little uſed to playing, and at all times parti-

larly averſe to it, immediately excuſed herſelf upon the plea of ignorance, and entreated Sophia, who was riſing, to follow Mr. Eltham, to apologize to Lady Julia for her.

As ſoon as they were gone, taking up a candle that was placed near the door, ſhe ſtole unperceived out of the room, and knowing perfectly the diſpoſition of every apartment in the houſe, haſtened down to the library. There, ſeating herſelf at the table, ſhe ſelected from a number of books which were ſcattered over it the charming poem, entitled "the Pleaſures of Memory," and ſoon forgot, in the delight with which ſhe peruſed it, the momentary chagrin ſhe had experienced.

From this intereſting employment ſhe was preſently diſturbed by the ſound of approaching footſteps in the adjoining room; ſhe liſtened attentively, when, equally to her ſurpriſe and vexation, the door was ſuddenly thrown open, and Mr. Eltham appeared.

Affecting an air of aſtoniſhment as he approached her, "Good God, Miſs Delmington," exclaimed he, "how long have you been here? I left every body in

in the drawing-room wondering at your abſence, and in pain for you leſt you ſhould be ill."

"It is time then," ſaid Clarentine, who from the moment of his entrance had riſen, and now advanced towards the door, "I ſhould, by returning, put an end to their conjectures."

Firſt," cried he, attempting to take her hand, "tell me you forgive this intruſion, and ſhew me what book you were reading."

"You will find it upon the table," ſaid ſhe, again advancing forward, "and as you do not play this evening, I would recommend it to your peruſal."

"But ſtay with me then, Miſs Delmington," cried he, "and whilſt they are all ſo earneſtly engaged above, let us read it together."

"What? and leave every body in ſuch pain about my health?" cried Clarentine ſmiling; "O no, Mr. Eltham, you cannot wiſh it, I am ſure."

So ſaying, as he had no farther pretence to withhold her, ſhe immediately left the room, and ſoon found herſelf

beyond his reach, and quietly ſeated by the ſide of Lady Julia.

To the numerous queſtions that were now aſked her, concerning her ſudden diſappearance, ſhe made ſuch ſlight anſwers, as in a very ſhort time prevented further enquiries; and finding ſoon after that Eltham, who was already returned, and it was plain had merely left the room in purſuit of her, ſat the only diſengaged perſon preſent except herſelf, and anxiouſly ſought to draw her into converſation, ſhe determined, in order to free herſelf from his attentions, to propoſe playing alſo, when it would be impoſſible for him to attach himſelf to her, more particularly than to any one elſe.

For this purpoſe, at the beginning of a new deal, ſhe begged Harriet and Sophia would make room for her between them, and requeſted permiſſion to join in the game. Glad to encreaſe their number, as at what they were playing, they were at liberty to admit as many as they choſe, they immediately conſented, and accordingly ſhe took her place, fully reſolved not to quit it till the whole party broke up.

Eltham,

Eltham, by this manoeuvre, left totally to his own inventions, and but ill-ſkilled apparently in the happy art of abſtracting his thoughts in a large company from ſurrounding objects, to direct them ſolely towards ſuch points as were likely to afford him amuſement from within, ſoon grew weary of the comparative ſolitude of his ſituation, and once more abruptly riſing, went back to the library, where he remained till Lady Delmington's carriage drove to the door.

Haſtily paſſing Lady Julia, whom on his return to the drawing-room he met going down ſtairs, conducted by Sir Edgar, he advanced eagerly towards Clarentine, and aſſiſting her in putting on her cloak, took her hand, and leading her forward, ſaid, "Well, Miſs Delmington, I have been looking into the charming poem you recommended to me, and am extremely pleaſed with it. If, as I imagine, you have not yet concluded it, I will do myſelf the honour of bringing it to you to-morrow morning."

"I beg you would not give yourſelf ſo much trouble, Sir," ſaid Clarentine,

" Lady Julia will perhaps ſend for it herſelf, and then—

" My dear Madam," interrupted he laughing, " it were vain for you to attempt oppoſing my intruſion at your houſe, ſince, independent of the pleaſure I ſhall have in paying my reſpects to Lady Delmington and yourſelf, I have yet another apology for my viſits, in the perſon of Lady Julia, to whom my near relationſhip entitles me, in ſome meaſure, to become an occaſional tormentor as long as my reſidence in her vicinity admits it. You find, therefore, that your caſe is deſperate. Arm yourſelf then with patience and reſignation."

Then putting her into the carriage, and wiſhing her good-night, he made a general bow to the reſt of the party, and ran back into the houſe.

During their ride home, Clarentine, who could not forbear laughing at the ſingularity of his laſt ſpeech, repeated it to Lady Julia, and at the ſame time gave her ſome account of what had paſſed between them in the library. This recital at once explained to them all his reaſon for refuſing to play; and led them afterwards

wards, in a ſtrain of good-humoured raillery, to congratulate Clarentine upon the conqueſt ſhe had made.

"A conqueſt, however," cried Sophia, "not to be very confidently relied upon, I fear, if Lord Welwyn's report, at leaſt, is to be credited. I am really ſorry for it; his vivacity delights me, and I ſhould be extremely pleaſed with ſuch a relation. Try whether you cannot fix him, Clarentine; it would be laying us all under the higheſt obligations; for, if he ſtaid in the country, how enchantingly would he enliven our winter parties!"

"With ſuch favourable diſpoſitions towards him," anſwered Clarentine, "you are more likely than any other to ſucceed yourſelf. By all means therefore, let me adviſe you to make the experiment."

"O, *me?* why, my dear girl, he paid me no more attention than if I had not been in the room, and ſcarcely looked at me the whole day."

"So much the better," ſaid Clarentine, "you may conclude therefore that his neglect was accidental, and aroſe rather

from his own want of penetration than your want of attractions."

"Very true," cried Sophia, affecting great ſatisfaction at this encouraging ſpeech, "I did not think of that before. You are a clever girl, Clarentine; and I give you infinite credit for the juſtice of the remark. To-morrow then, if this uncourteous knight deſigns to honour us with a viſit, I may hope, (*you* abſent however, and *myſelf* ſet off, to the beſt advantage) to make a greater impreſſion upon him!—aye, that will do extremely well: and I ſhall be *almoſt* as well pleaſed as if any other had won the day."

Thus did this light-hearted and happy girl run on till the carriage ſtopped, when bidding her companions compoſe their countenances, that Mrs. Harrington might not be ſhocked by too great an appearance of gaiety, they alighted, and gravely proceeded towards the ſupper room.

Lady Delmington, who was reading aloud when they entered, received them with her accuſtomed cordiality and kindneſs; but Mrs. Harrington, an adept in the illiberal art of miſconſtruing appearances, inſtantly obſerving, notwithſtand-

ing her endeavours to conceal it, an uncommon tendency to riſibility in Sophia's face, drily remarked, as ſoon as they ſat down, that ſhe was glad to perceive their concern for thoſe they had left at home did not ſeem at all to have affected their ſpirits, at leaſt, if ſhe might judge by the happy unconcern that ſhewed itſelf in their countenances.

"Dear ma'am," ſaid Sophia giddily, "I am ſure that did not contribute to enliven us; I dare ſay we none of us ever thought of the matter. I hope however," added ſhe, "you find yourſelf better this evening?"

Though uttered haſtily, without reflection, and without deſign, this unfortunate ſpeech put the finiſhing ſtroke to poor Sophia's diſgrace. Mrs. Harrington's remonſtrances upon it were pointed and ſevere; even Clarentine and Harriet were not exempted from her diſpleaſure: but, though they had both obſerved the ſtricteſt ſilence from the moment of their entrance, found themſelves unexpectedly involved in it, merely for having omitted, when they came in, the ceremonious and inſignificant etiquette of enquiring how

ſhe

ſhe did before they ventured to ſeat themſelves.

So long, and ſo tedious were her reproaches upon this ſubject, that Lady Julia, utterly unaccuſtomed to ſuch lectures, and wearied beyond meaſure at its duration, rung for her woman before it was half over, and curtſying in ſilence to Lady Delmington, haſtened to her own room.

Not daring to follow her example, the ill-fated trio, now oppreſſed and ſaddened, ſat down to ſupper as ſoon as ſhe was gone, and though all appetite was loſt, and to eat was out of the queſtion, preſerved a tolerable good countenance till the cloth was removed, and they were releaſed by the welcome ſound of the great houſe clock, which at length ſtruck the hour at which they were wont to retire.

CHAP. IV.

THE next morning, Clarentine, by no means thinking herſelf under any obligation to remain at home on Mr. Eltham's account, and feeling indeed far from anxious to appropriate to herſelf any part of the honour his viſit might be intended to confer, walked to *Mont-Repos* as ſoon as breakfaſt was over, to enquire whether the Chevalier de Valcour was returned, and what had been the ſucceſs of his expedition.

He met her at the door with his hat on, upon the very point of ſetting out for Delmington himſelf. They both entered the parlour together, where, in preſence of Madame d'Arzele, he gave her the detail for which ſhe was ſo anxious.

In the firſt place he told her, that, at the diſtance of about half a mile from Sidmouth, he had diſcovered a farm-houſe very pleaſantly ſituated, in which were two ready-furniſhed bed-chambers and a parlour, that might immediately be hired upon the moſt reaſonable terms (including

(including the uſe of the kitchen) either by the week or month, which ever ſuited beſt. He next informed her that the little ſupply for which Madame d'Arzele had waited, arrived the preceding evening, and that conſequently, nothing now remained but for Clarentine to fix the time when it would be moſt convenient for her to ſet out.

"O let it not reſt upon that," cried ſhe earneſtly, "my time is Madame d'Arzele's. Whenever, therefore, her dear little girl is able to bear the removal, I am at her command."

"Then my beſt Clarentine," ſaid that lady, "as I am now extremely anxious to avoid all further delay, we will begin our journey, if you pleaſe, the day after to morrow. The Chevalier will ſee us ſafe to our place of deſtination; and then returns to ſpend the period of my abſence at Lord Welwyn's, who, this morning, ſent him the moſt preſſing and cordial invitation to that purpoſe. My *femme de chambre* will go with us; the other maid remains here to take care of the houſe."

This point being ſettled, Clarentine embraced the three children, and bidding

Madame

Madame d'Arzele an affectionate farewel, left the houſe, and eſcorted by the Chevalier, directed her ſteps homewards.

As their road lay directly between Welwyn Park and Delmington, it appeared extremely probable to Clarentine that either in his way to, or from the laſt-mentioned place, ſhe might meet Mr. Eltham. Neither anxious, however, to avoid ſuch a meeting, nor to promote it, ſhe walked quietly on, preparing herſelf to expect it, yet perfectly indifferent whether it took place or not.

In this diſpoſition of mind, ſhe reached home without any moleſtation, ſecretly congratulating herſelf upon that, which, notwithſtanding all her philoſophy, ſhe could not help regarding as an eſcape; and followed by the Chevalier, joined the uſual party in the great parlour.

She had ſcarcely had time to deliver Madame d'Arzele's compliments, and apologies for not calling before ſhe went, and to announce to Lady Delmington the plan that had been agreed upon, when the door opened, and Mr. Eltham was announced.

He

He was accompanied by Sir Edgar, who came, he ſaid, to beg his room might be prepared for him to ſleep in the following night, as, the next day, he was going with Mr. Eltham to dine at a gentleman's houſe in the neighbourhood, at which he expected to be detained ſo late, that, fearful of diſturbing Lord Welwyn by returning at ſuch an hour, he meant not to go back to his houſe till the morning after.

"A very prudent plan indeed!" cried Lady Delmington, "and why, my dear Edgar, ſhould you conſent to ſtay ſo late?"

"O, the nights are very light now," cried Eltham, "and *I'll* engage, ſhould Sir Edgar find himſelf at all embarraſſed, to guide him home in perfect ſafety."

"Why *you* don't propoſe to ſleep here too?" ſaid Lady Julia, "do you?"

"Certainly not," anſwered he, "I have not the preſumption to imagine I ſhould be admitted: but to quiet Lady Delmington's apprehenſions, I would gladly eſcort Sir Edgar hither, even at the riſk of being ſhut out of my own reſting-place."

"And,

"And, where, may I aſk, will *be* your reſting-place, Sir?" ſaid Lady Delmington ſmiling.

"At the inn at Lyſton, Madam," anſwered he.

"Why then Edgar," reſumed her Ladyſhip, "I think that had better be *yours* alſo. I am not at all more deſirous of having my houſe diſturbed in the middle of the night than Lord Welwyn can be; and ſince you both ſeem diſpoſed to conform to the ſame hours, you may ſurely both conform to the ſame accommodations."

"Alas! Madam," cried Eltham, "I fear, reaſonable as this plan is, it cannot be put in execution. My hopes of ſecuring a bed for myſelf were at one time ſo forlorn, that I was very near coming to ſupplicate for one here, as well as Sir Edgar. I ſhould have had *Lady Julia*'s intereſt, I am ſure; and was perſuaded I might rely upon *her* ſeconding my petition moſt earneſtly."

Lady Julia ſhook her head, and laughed, but made no anſwer; and Sir Edgar addreſſing his mother, ſaid, "What Mr. Eltham tells you, madam, is really the caſe.

caſe. We have been to Lyſton this very morning; but found the town ſo amazingly filled, owing to the fair, which is now held there, that it was impoſſible to procure more than one bed."

"Well then," ſaid Lady Delmington, "your room ſhall be prepared: but I hope, my dear Edgar, you will not make it a practice to keep ſuch intolerable hours, for they are extremely diſagreeable to me."

"Blame Mr. Eltham, madam," cried Lady Julia, "ſince I have not any doubt but that it was he who ſeduced Sir Edgar into forming this horrid engagement. Confeſs the truth honeſtly," continued ſhe, "and tell us whether it is not ſo?"

Eltham was beginning an anſwer, when the entrance of Mrs. Harrington, whom he had never before ſeen, put a ſtop to it; and going round to Clarentine, who ſat at work at a little table near the window, he leaned over the back of her chair, and ſaid in a low voice, "Who is that petrifying memento of mortality? that fearful repreſentative of every evil propenſity concentered?"

Clarentine

Clarentine ſtarted, and aſked whom he meant?

"O, truſt me," cried he, "I don't know her name, and I almoſt wonder I ſhould *wiſh* to know it: but tell me, the antique perſonage who juſt came in—who is ſhe?"

"Do you wiſh to be introduced to her?"

"If that is a neceſſary ceremony, yes, certainly. I wiſh to be well with every member of this family."

Clarentine then beckoned to Sophia, and in the ſame low voice ſaid, "Mr. Eltham wiſhes to be preſented to Mrs. Harrington, will you undertake the office?"

"With all my heart," anſwered Sophia, "I have an excellent memory, and remember the whole of what Lord Welwyn ſaid yeſterday upon a ſimilar occaſion, not one word of which I will omit."

"Oh, the D—l!" exclaimed Eltham, "you'll ruin me! Talk of prodigality and diſſipation to ſuch a ſtern old lady as that? You'll undo me!"

"Surely," ſaid Sophia, "you cannot expect me to be more lenient than your uncle!"

"And

"And why not?" cried he laughing, "Lord Welwyn himſelf believed not one word he uttered; he ſaw I was captivated by the ſight of ſo much beauty;" bowing to them both, "and fearful of the conſequences, deſcribed me in ſuch uncharitable terms merely to preſerve you from being too much faſcinated by my extraordinary merit."

"Lord Welwyn was very good," ſaid Sophia, "but really I don't think we were in any danger."

"Ah, believe me, you deceive yourſelves. I never met with a woman yet, (ſuch only as that good lady," looking at Mrs. Harrington, "excepted) who did not think me irreſiſtible!"

"Or, at leaſt," ſaid Sophia drily, "the quinteſſence of *modeſty!*"

"Aye," cried he, "that is one of my principal excellencies. I carry it even to an exceſs, and am accuſed by many people of abſolute *baſhfulneſs*. But," continued he, "if I am not miſtaken I had beſt depart, for your friend there," again looking at Mrs. Harrington, "ſeems to regard me with no friendly aſpect. It is aſtoniſhing how all theſe ancient ladies tremble,

tremble, the moment they ſee me ſpeak to a pretty woman!"

So ſaying, he looked round for his hat, and was upon the point of taking leave, when Lady Julia called him back.

"Mr. Eltham," cried ſhe ſmiling, "will you undertake to obtain my father's leave for me to go to Lyſton fair this evening? Tell him Lady Delmington has given her daughters permiſſion to go with Sir Edgar, and intreat him to allow me to accompany them."

Eltham promiſed to perform this commiſſion, and bowing reſpectfully to Lady Delmington, took Sir Edgar under the arm, and left the room. The Chevalier roſe at the ſame time, and followed them out.

"Who is that bold looking young man?" ſaid Mrs. Harrington, the moment he was gone.

"My couſin, Madam," anſwered Lady Julia gravely.

Mrs. Harrington, a little diſconcerted, changed the ſubject, and ſoon after, telling Lady Delmington ſhe wiſhed to ſpeak to her, they went together into another room.

On

On their return, a long contention enſued between Mrs. Harrington, Harriet, and Sophia, concerning the projected party to Lyſton. Not chuſing to attack Lady Julia upon that ſubject, yet extremely averſe to the ſcheme's taking place, ſhe had called Lady Delmington out of the room for the ſole purpoſe of urging her to counteract it; her Ladyſhip having given her poſitive ſanction to it, however, ſaid ſhe could not now recall it; but contented herſelf with promiſing, at Mrs. Harrington's earneſt perſuaſion, to oppoſe Clarentine's going with them.

It was on this prohibition's being pronounced, the two ſiſters, but Sophia in particular, gaining courage from her mother's paſſive ſilence, ventured to plead warmly in Clarentine's behalf; Lady Julia alſo joined to theirs her own entreaties, but in vain. Mrs. Harrington ſaid, it might be very proper for her Ladyſhip, who was related to Mr. Eltham, and the two Miſs Delmingtons, who would be accompanied by their brother, to engage in ſuch an expedition: but, that for Clarentine, as there was no married lady with them, as Mr. Eltham was almoſt a ſtranger

to

to her, and Sir Edgar by no means an eligible guardian for her, ſhe thought it would be highly blameable in Lady Delmington to ſuffer her to go.

Clarentine, though ſhe was by no means the dupe of this affected tenderneſs for her reputation, was at once too gentle, and too rational, to think it worth while to enter into any argument upon the ſubject; but thanking Lady Julia, and her two couſins, for their kindneſs in wiſhing her to be of their party, ſaid ſhe ſhould return to *Mont-Repos* before the gentlemen came back, that no queſtions might be aſked, and ſpend the evening quietly with Madame d'Arzele.

Lady Delmington, upon this, gave her a look of affectionate approbation; and Mrs. Harrington, with an air of triumph, told her ſhe could not do better.

A little before ſix, the two gentlemen arrived on horſeback, attended by a ſervant driving Lord Welwyn's *ſociable*, which had been ſent for the accommodation of the young ladies. Sophia, the inſtant they reached the door, ran out to ſay they were all ready; and the next

minute, Lady Julia, Harriet, and the little Emma appeared.

Eltham, as he handed them in, whilſt Sir Edgar was talking at the window to his mother, enquired eagerly after Clarentine. She had been gone near half an hour: but Lady Julia thinking it beſt to prevent the exclamations this intelligence would give riſe to, till they were beyond the hearing of Mrs. Harrington, affected for ſome time not to hear him; and at length, on being urged with redoubled earneſtneſs, careleſsly anſwered, "ſhe is gone on before, but we may perhaps overtake her at the end of the avenue. Drive on, Francis," ſpeaking to the ſervant.

"No, no, ſtop!" exclaimed Eltham, "you deceive us, Lady Julia. Had ſhe been in the avenue we ſhould have met her as we rode up. Where is ſhe? You cannot poſſibly mean to ſet off without her!"

"I aſſure you," cried Lady Julia, rather impatiently, "ſhe is not in the houſe. Suffer us to go on, and I will tell you more."

Eltham

Eltham reluctantly acquieſced, and before Sir Edgar had finiſhed his converſation, or had had leiſure to remark that Clarentine was not of their party, the carriage moved on.

The firſt moment Lady Julia ſeemed diſpoſed to liſten to him, Eltham renewed his interrogations.

"Why ſo much myſtery upon this ſubject?" cried he, "why were you ſo averſe to anſwering me ſooner?"

"Becauſe," replied Lady Julia, "before Mrs. Harrington, who was obſerving us from the windows, it would have been highly improper, ſince as it was ſhe who prevented Clarentine's going with us, your animadverſions would have exaſperated her extremely."

This account brought on an innumerable train of further inquiries, as well from Mr. Eltham, as Sir Edgar, whoſe aſtoniſhment at ſuch an act of authority could only be exceeded by his concern for the unſupported Clarentine, and his indignation againſt the arbitrary proceedings of Mrs. Harrington.

"Bitterly ſhall we all have cauſe to lament," cried he, "the hour that firſt

introduced that woman into our family! From its having been one of the moſt united and happy upon earth, ſhe will render it the moſt turbulent and wretched; my mother ſuffers herſelf to be made her tool, and ever at variance with ſome individual or other amongſt us, nothing in future can be expected but an inceſſant repetition of paltry wranglings in public, or of determined tyranny in private."

"Well, my dear Edgar," cried Sophia, ſurpriſed at the unuſual acrimony with which he ſpoke, "however true all this may be, you have leſs reaſon to complain than any of us, ſince, rarely as you are now at home, your ſufferings muſt be trifling indeed compared to ours."

"Ah!" thought Edgar, "neither is it for myſelf I feel! My concern is wholly for the defenceleſs, and too ſubmiſſive Clarentine, who being the chief object againſt whom all Mrs. Harrington's malice is levelled, muſt, conſequently, be liable to far greater mortifications than any one elſe!"

Diſtreſſing to him as was this idea, he ſcarcely rallied ſpirits ſufficient to ſpeak again during the whole evening. Eltham and

Sophia occaſionally addreſſed eath other, and attempted to animate the converſation, but unaſſiſted as they were, their endeavours failed; and this, as moſt other concerted *parties of pleaſure* do, ended in laſſitude, inſipidity, and diſappointment.

As they were returning, a ſcheme occurred to Eltham which was unanimouſly agreed to, the moment he mentioned it. This was, to call, in their way to Delmington, at *Mont-Repos*, and there to take up Clarentine, and carry her on with them. Sir Edgar was ſo revived by this propoſal, which the unpleaſant train of reflections he had been thrown into had effectually prevented *his* thinking of, that he no ſooner heard it ſtarted, than, galloping forward, without ſtopping to utter a ſingle word, he left them to prepare Clarentine for their approach.

On his entrance into the room where ſhe was ſitting, he found her alone, and to his inexpreſſible aſtoniſhment, practiſing upon the harp a very beautiful compoſition, which (among many others Madame d'Arzele had privately taught her in the courſe of the winter) ſhe had lately begun learning. He pauſed a moment at

the door, in ſilent amazement; and then eagerly advancing, at the very time ſhe firſt looked up and perceived him, he exclaimed, "My deareſt Clarentine! how do I honour that activity of mind, which thus leads you, though in ſecrecy and ſilence, to cultivate thoſe talents you are endowed with. Well might you, who ſo well know how to employ every hour, be reſigned to the harſh prohibition you received: but tell me, how are *we* to acquire equal ſubmiſſion? You know not with what ſincerity we have lamented a deprivation we had ſo little reaſon to expect."

Clarentine, though ſurprized at the earneſtneſs of this addreſs, choſe not to diſclaim the compliment it conveyed, well knowing that was always looked upon as a challenge to continue in the ſame ſtrain. She therefore, with her accuſtomed modeſt ſimplicity, anſwered, "You were all very good to think ſo much about me, and I can aſſure you I was extremely concerned myſelf not to be of your party. But pray Edgar, where have you left Lady Julia and your ſiſters? What brings you here alone?"

Sir

Sir Edgar had ſcarcely time to acquaint her with the motive of her viſit, before Etham, Lady Julia, and her companions appeared. The buſtle their arrival occaſioned ſoon brought down Madame d'Arzele from her nurſery; and then being extremely preſſed to ſit down a few minutes, Lady Julia, ſent home the *ſociable*, every body declaring with one voice that as the evening was ſo beautiful, it would be much pleaſanter to walk than ride the remainder of the way.

Chairs being now placed round the table, the three ladies, who laſt came in, produced, to the great amuſement of the whole company, a number of little toys they had purchaſed as *fairings* for Madame d'Arzele's children. Then turning to Clarentine, Lady Julia with a ſmile ſaid, as ſhe preſented to her a ſmall ſilver anchor, "This, my dear girl, is the only thing I could meet with that ſeemed to me to be ſo well adapted to you. Knowing your paſſion for ſailors, I thought an anchor, as well becauſe it is the emblem of hope, as the repreſentative of that, on which depends the ſafety of your fa-

vourites, might appear of ſome value to you. Tell me, did I judge right?"

"Yes, perfectly," anſwered Clarentine, receiving it with a grateful ſmile; "you could not have beſtowed upon me any thing, which, for the reaſons you mention, I ſhould have thought more precious. In remembrance of you, and of Mr. Somerſet, for whoſe ſake chiefly I am ſo partial to ſailors, I will preſerve it moſt carefully."

"Oh, how do I lament," cried Sophia, "ſince imagination can give ſo much to whatever reminds us in the remoteſt degree of an abſent friend, my ſtupidity in not looking out for ſomething that might, during your ſtay at Sidmouth, have brought to your recollection the inhabitants of Delmington. *A whirligig*, for inſtance, could never have failed having that effect with regard to Edgar, and—

"How," interrupted Lady Julia, "*a whirligig!* and why ſo?"

"Bleſs me! don't you know? Why Edgar, as Clarentine has juſtly remarked, has a mutability of diſpoſition, and an uncertainty of temper that cannot be ſo properly

properly repreſented by any other ſymbol."

Clarentine looking up at that moment, and obſerving in Sir Edgar's countenance, notwithſtanding the faint attempt he made to ſmile, an expreſſion of embarraſſment and conſciouſneſs, inſtantly ſtarted a new ſubject, and gave a different turn to the converſation.

Having ſat with Madame d'Arzele about half an hour, and being fearful of exciting Mrs. Harrington's ever ready cenſure by a longer ſtay, they now all roſe to depart. Lady Julia and the two Miſs Delmingtons took a very affectionate leave of Madame d'Arzele; the former entreated ſhe might often hear from her, and repeatedly urged her to make her abſence as ſhort as poſſible. Then leaving a thouſand kind meſſages for the children, ſhe led the way and hurried down ſtairs.

In the entrance they were accoſted by the Chevalier, who having ſpent the evening with Lord Welwyn, was juſt returned. He inſiſted upon eſcorting the ladies home, though already ſo well at-

tended; and accordingly ſet out with them.

Dividing themſelves into ſeparate parties, each of the gentlemen, either according to inclination or neceſſity, attached himſelf to a different lady. Sir Edgar, wholly influenced in his choice, by the *latter* motive, walked by the ſide of Lady Julia, who, at intervals, with much difficulty, ſtarted a momentary converſation; but more generally, ſuffered him quietly to indulge the taciturn gravity, into which he had once more relapſed. Immediately behind them followed Clarentine and Eltham, the direct contraſts of their two leaders; all the converſation between them, proceeding from the gentleman, and all the deſire of ſilence from the lady. Harriet and Emma, both ſpiritleſs and fatigued, walked near them; and laſt of all, came Sophia, who with unabated animation was gaily flirting with the Chevalier, and ſeemed to be the only one preſent, that was perfectly ſatisfied with the partner who had fallen to her lot.

Herſelf excepted therefore, nobody appeared, when at length, the moment of

ſeparating

ſeparating drew near, to lament it. The gentlemen, after ſeeing them to the end of the avenue, turned back, and left their companions, trembling at the idea of meeting Mrs. Harrington, (for it was now near ten o'clock) to frame the beſt excuſes they could for the length of their abſence.

Though in her expreſſions of open diſapprobation, that lady, when they appeared, was not ſo ſevere as ſhe had been the preceding night, yet her reception of them, upon the whole, was very little pleaſanter: that ſhe did not indeed break out into abſolute reproaches, could alone be attributed to the expectation ſhe had, that Lady Delmington would do it herſelf, on account of little Emma, whoſe uſual hour of going to reſt being now conſiderably paſt, had conſequently rendered her extremely uneaſy at their delay.

Lady Julia, anxious to ſave her friends, took the whole blame upon herſelf, the moment Lady Delmington's mild, but ſerious, rebuke began. She ſaid nothing of their viſit to *Mont-Repos*, leaving it to be ſuppoſed, they met with Clarentine,

by accident: but accuſed herſelf of having been the ſole cauſe of detaining them ſo long at Lyſton, and interceded moſt earneſtly for a general pardon.

Such a pleader, even Mrs. Harrington choſe not to withſtand. All anger therefore was ſoon forgotten; and an unwonted degree of ſerenity and chearfulneſs prevailed during the remainder of the evening.

CHAP. VI.

THE following day, till near dinner time, Clarentine was buſily employed in preparing for her journey, that ſhe might be ready the next morning, when Madame d'Arzele, who muſt neceſſarily drive paſt the door, called to take her up.

As this occupation, therefore, had kept her in her own room ſo many hours, Lady Julia, who was deſirous of having a little quiet converſation with her before ſhe went,

went, took the firſt opportunity, after they aroſe from table, of propoſing to her a ſhort walk in the garden. Clarentine willingly agreed to it, and they quitted the room together.

The extreme heat of the weather, however, ſoon drove them in, and compelled them once more to return to the parlour; where whilſt Harriet read aloud, the reſt ſat down to work, or draw, near the window.

The clock had juſt ſtruck ten, and they were upon the point of ſitting down to ſupper, when a tremendous clap of thunder, preceded by ſeveral vivid flaſhes of lightning, ſtartled the whole party, and almoſt ſhook the gothic manſion to its foundation. Lady Delmington, though the uncommon ſultrineſs of the day had taught her to expect it, was filled, notwithſtanding, with conſternation and terror, when ſhe reflected upon the danger to which her ſon might be expoſed, returning through a woody country on horſeback, in the midſt of ſuch a ſtorm.

For near three hours, during which it continued at intervals to rage with unabated violence, neither Lady Delmington

ton nor her two daughters, quitted the parlour. Clarentine would gladly have remained with them, but her aunt, apprehending that if Emma awoke ſhe would be frightened, begged ſhe would go up, and ſit with her. Lady Julia followed, and for ſome time continued with her; but at length, growing extremely ſleepy, and not being infected with any fears herſelf, ſhe bade her good night, and retired to her own room.

It was near two o'clock before Sir Edgar came home; he ſeemed extremely ſurpriſed to find his mother and ſiſters up at ſuch an hour; but when he heard the cauſe, though he derided their alarm, he alſo thanked them for their anxiety, and beſought them earneſtly not to remain below a moment longer. Lady Delmington, fatigued and harraſſed as ſhe was, in mind, as well as body, readily followed his advice, and rejoicing in his ſafety, called to her daughters, and left the room. Harriet immediately joined her: but juſt as Sophia reached the door, her brother brought her back by a motion of his head, and leading her to the table, ſaid—

" Sophia,

"Sophia, I am the happieſt fellow upon earth! Behold," taking out his purſe, and ſhaking it as he ſpoke, "what propitious Fortune has ſent me. I have been playing to-night, and in leſs than two hours, won near an hundred guineas! to-morrow I redeem my watch, my books, and every thing I had parted with."

"A very honourable method," ſaid Sophia, drily, "of acquiring money for ſuch a purpoſe!"

"Nay, do not chide me," cried he; "I reſiſted playing, till being the only one that ſat out, I could reſiſt no longer. Some guardian angel, at length, prompted me to the deed—ſome bleſſed ſpirit, that ſaw, and pitied my diſtreſs!"

"I ſhould have thought," cried Sophia, "that angels and ſpirits had been wiſer! This lowers my opinion of their underſtanding extremely; I am glad, however, for your ſake, they have ſo little brains; and heartily wiſh you good night."

"Stop one minute," cried he, laughing, "you muſt inform Clarentine of this event. Why did ſhe not ſit up with you?"

"Becauſe

"Becauſe perhaps, ſhe had a *preſentiment* of all the extravagancies ſhe might hear."

"She is really gone to bed, then?"

"I imagine ſo; but am not ſure."

Sir Edgar ſaid no more, and the next minute Sophia left him.

As ſoon as he concluded ſhe had reached her own room, he cautiouſly directed his ſteps towards the gallery, at the end of which Clarentine ſlept, and certain of not being heard, as no one elſe occupied that part of the houſe, knocked at the door. No anſwer being returned, and no ſound, ſave that of the thunder ſtill rolling at a diſtance, reaching his ears, he began to fear ſhe was actually gone to bed. Determined to make one more trial, however, he waited a few minutes, and then knocking again, heard her, at length, in a tone of terror and affright, aſk who was there?

"Me," anſwered Edgar—"are you dreſſed? Will you come down?"

"Come down?" repeated ſhe, "at this time of night?"

"It is not ſo late as you imagine," anſwered he, "I will not detain you five minutes:

minutes: but I muſt ſee, I muſt ſpeak to you."

"Indeed, Edgar, you cannot—what will your mother ſay to me for leaving Emma?"

"Emma is aſleep, is ſhe not?"

"Yes."

"Then you *muſt* come. My mother is in the parlour, and ſent me to call you."

In any other ſituation of mind, Sir Edgar would have ſtarted at the bare idea of uttering ſuch a falſehood: but his head was not at that time entirely his own. Fluſhed with drinking, and elevated with ſucceſs, his powers of reflection were totally ſuſpended, and he ſcarcely felt conſcious himſelf of what he was doing.

Clarentine, in the innocence of her heart, ſuſpected no deceit, but anxious to obey Lady Delmington's ſuppoſed ſummons, ſoftly opened her door, and ſaid ſhe was ready to follow him.

He eagerly ſeized her extended hand, and as they proceeded, aſked her, how long ſhe had been ſitting there alone?

"Not

"Not ſo long, perhaps," anſwered ſhe, "as the horrors of the night made me ſuppoſe: but yet a ſufficient time to have rendered me quite chill and comfortleſs."

"Did you beſtow a thought upon *me*," ſaid he, "whilſt you ſat there? Did you participate in my mother's apprehenſions for *my* ſafety? Tell me, deareſt Clarentine—for *your* pity, *your* anxiety would more than recompenſe me for any dangers!"

"I often wiſhed you were at home," anſwered ſhe, a little ſtartled at the earneſtneſs of his manner, "but did not imagine that to be expoſed to any danger of this ſort could, for a moment, appal ſuch a ſpirit as yours."

They had by this time reached the parlour, which Clarentine perceiving to be empty, ſhrunk back from, and fearfully exclaimed—"What is it you have done, Sir Edgar?—where is Lady Delmington?"

"Be not alarmed," cried he, ſtill endeavouring to draw her forward, "indeed you have nothing to apprehend. I have deceived

deceived you, it is true, with regard to my mother's being here: but when you hear my reaſons, I am ſure you will forgive me. Come in then—if, as I ſaid before, only for five minutes."

"O, no, no, no!" cried ſhe," ſtruggling to get from him, "not for an inſtant! I would not ſtay, I would not liſten to you to-night for the world!"

"You *muſt* hear me," returned he, compelling her to advance, "to-morrow you will be gone; this, therefore, is my only time."

Then, ſeizing the key of the door, and turning it with precipitation in the lock, he drew it out and put it in his pocket.

Clarentine, aghaſt at this ſight, and looking at him a moment, with mingled aſtoniſhment and indignation, forcibly ſnatched away her hand, and burſt into tears.

"Oh! my Clarentine!" exclaimed he, dropping on one knee before her, "what is it you fear? Why this diſtreſs? Am I grown hateful to you? Am I no longer the Edgar you formerly truſted with ſuch implicit confidence—you called your brother, your friend? Oh! have you forgot the

the happy time when mutually pleaſed to be together—"

"O riſe, riſe, Sir Edgar!" interrupted Clarentine angrily, "this is not a moment to talk to me in ſuch language; neither would you expoſe me to the aſperſions this ill timed interview will bring upon me, were you *indeed* the friend you would be thought! Releaſe me inſtantly therefore, or you will drive me to deſperation!"

So ſaying, ſhe ſuddenly diſengaged herſelf, and flew towards the bell which ſhe was going to pull with violence, when he ran to her, again ſeized both her hands, and called out—

"Forbear, dear Clarentine, I beſeech you, and patiently conſent to hear me; your efforts to eſcape would all be vain, ſince no one in the houſe could hear that bell, were you even to ring it. Its ſound reaches no further than the kitchen, and that has long been deſerted."

"Well, then, Sir," ſaid Clarentine, with a dignified calmneſs that totally overawed him, "for the laſt time, I hope, that I ſhall ever be compelled to liſten to you again—ſpeak—"

Then

Then moving towards the table, ſhe coldly ſeated herſelf before it, and leaning her head upon her hands, prepared to hear him without interruption.

Diſconcerted, and irreſolute, he pauſed a few moments, and then drawing the key from his pocket, preſented it to her, and ſaid—

"I commit myſelf, deareſt Clarentine, to your generoſity. Take this key, and —if you can have the cruelty, leave me this moment!"

Clarentine, much ſoftened, received it in ſilence, and for ſome time retained it in her hand, without having the courage to riſe. At length, however, ſhe went towards the door, and ſaid—

"You muſt be ſenſible yourſelf, Sir Edgar, of the impropriety of a meeting ſo clandeſtine as this. I cannot therefore ſtay: but if you will tell Sophia what you have to impart to me, ſhe will, after I get to Sidmouth, write to—"

"Cruel, inhuman girl!" interrupted he impetuouſly, "*Is this* all you will grant me? Are you determined, by flying me ſo precipitately, to make me repent my folly in giving you the power? Oh Clarentine!

Clarentine! I thought better of the ſoftneſs of your diſpoſition, or I had never truſted you with the means of quitting me, till I had *compelled* you to hear me!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Clarentine, holding the door half open in her hand, "what is it you would ſay to me?"

"What I cannot, any longer, perſuade myſelf to conceal; what you muſt already, in part, ſuſpect; what I am irrevocably determined ſhortly to publiſh to the whole world!"

"Heavens!" exclaimed Clarentine, trembling, and almoſt breathleſs, "what is it you mean?"

"To conſecrate my future life to you," anſwered he, with vehemence, "to proclaim aloud my fervent adoration of you, to reverence, to love, to cheriſh you to my lateſt breath."

"Huſh, for ſhame, Sir! cried Clarentine, colouring with reſentment, "reſerve theſe proteſtations for *Lady Julia Leyburne!*"

And then with a look expreſſive of all the contempt ſhe felt, ſhe would have hurried out of the room.

"This

"This is too much!" exclaimed Sir Edgar, in a voice rendered almoſt inarticulate by his own emotion. "Dear Clarentine! lovely, yet proud, unmerciful Clarentine! I cannot endure ſuch contemptuous diſdain! Talk not to me of Lady Julia Leyburne—By heaven, I ſwear—"

"Fie, fie, Sir Edgar!" interrupted Clarentine, "this is unmanly, diſhonourable, worthleſs! Lady Julia, it is no ſecret, is deſtined to be yours; ſhe is amiable, ſhe is good, and, above all, ſhe is my friend! Imagine not then, I will quietly ſubmit to the inſult you would do us both, by pledging your perjured faith to me, at the very time, (and, with your own conſent) your marriage is negociating with her!—You wrong us equally—you degrade yourſelf for ever in my opinion, and make me bluſh to remember the regard I once felt for you!"

"Oh, my Clarentine, condemn me not unheard!" cried he, again withholding her, "the cruelty of my ſituation is ſuch, as, for a time, to render diſſimulation abſolutely neceſſary. I never gave any but a tacit conſent to the union propoſed; I never

never attempted to ſeduce Lady Julia's affection; I have made no promiſes; ſigned no articles; in ſhort, have preſerved myſelf as free, as, till I am of age, I have any hopes of being. My mother, had ſhe ſuſpected my attachment to you, would have removed you from my ſight; would, perhaps for ever, have torn you from me!"

Here, while the door ſtood ōpen, the ſudden appearance of a light in the hall diſmayed the trembling Clarentine, who looking towards it, uttered the name of "Mrs. Harrington," with a faint ſcream, and gaſping for brēath, caught hold of the back of a chair for ſupport.

Meanwhile, Sir Edgar, who during the latter part of this converſation had again ſunk upon his knee before her, abruptly ſtarted up, though not in time to eſcape the notice of Mrs. Harrington. She now entered, pale with rage, her tall figure wrapt in a long white dreſſing-gown, and her feeble lamp, flaſhing an unſteady light at intervals acroſs her face.

"I have *proof* then now," cried ſhe, as ſoon as ſhe was able to ſpeak, in a voice that made poor Clarentine ſhudder,

"ocular

"ocular proof of what I have ſo long apprehended! Thy arts, vile wretch," addreſſing Clarentine, "have fully ſucceeded, and that infatuated boy, ſeduced by their infernal influence, has fallen into the ſnare thou haſt prepared for him! Go!" continued ſhe, furiouſly ſtamping as ſhe ſpoke, "Go, deceitful Syren! and never may I be blaſted by thy ſight again!"

All the iraſcible paſſions in Edgar's nature were rouſed by this unwomanly attack. Trembling with indignation; fearleſs of conſequences, and rendered deſperate by oppoſition, he fiercely addreſſed Mrs. Harrington, and ſaid—

"By what right, by what authority, Madam, do you uſurp the privilege of ſpeaking to any of this family in ſuch opprobrious terms? Clarentine is under my mother's protection, is under *mine*; and neither *ſhall*, nor *deſerves* to be inſulted by language ſo outrageous!"

"Grant me patience, heaven!" cried Mrs. Harrington, with encreaſing vehemence! "Grant me patience to bear this dauntleſs aſſurance! Mad boy! be ſilent, and inſtantly remove that creature from

my ſight, or I will not anſwer for the extremities to which my abhorrence of her may drive me!"

Clarentine, who long ſince had crept towards the door with a view of making her eſcape, but had hitherto been prevented by Sir Edgar, now, in a low and faltering voice, ſaid, "For mercy, for pity's ſake! Sir Edgar, let me paſs!"

"Fear nothing, my love," cried he tenderly, "are you not with me? then, who will *dare* moleſt you? Be comforted, my own Clarentine! be reaſſured; and truſt me, what I have ſo ſolemnly ſworn, I never will retract—the faith I have ſo voluntarily pledged, I never will recall!"

"Alas!" cried ſhe mournfully, "that faith I wiſh not to accept—that oath I wiſh not ſhould be binding! You have ruined, you have deſtroyed me! My reputation is gone for ever, and I care not now what becomes of me, or how great the ſhame that awaits me!"

During this time, Mrs. Harrington, finding her power by no means equal to the taſk ſhe had undertaken, had precipitately left the room, almoſt unnoticed by

by the two miſerable beings ſhe left behind her.

"You renounce me then!" cried Edgar reproachfully; "now, at the very moment I wiſh to make my devotion to you public, you coldly, unfeelingly renounce me, and reject my proffered faith! Oh, Clarentine! I had a right to expect more ſenſibility from you! I had a right, when willing myſelf to hazard every thing in order to obtain you, to expect ſome ſupport from your own firmneſs!"

"The moment you have choſen, Sir Edgar," returned Clarentine, "to make your partiality known to me; the ties that already, in honour, bind you—the oppoſition of your family, and a thouſand other reaſons, all combine, to determine me at once to put an end to your hopes. Neither reproaches, importunity, nor perſeverance, ſhall ever make me yours; nor ſhall any circumſtances, nor any time, induce me to alter my reſolution, ſince the remembrance of the ſcene you have involved me in can never be effaced from my mind, nor the artifice and duplicity imputed to me ever be wiped off from my character! Make not, therefore, any

attempt to change your mother's plan; deny not your engagement, inſult not Lady Julia, nor offend her father; for I here firmly proteſt to you, that were they to-morrow to releaſe you; were you privileged to-morrow to offer me your hand, after what has paſſed, nothing on earth ſhould prevail upon me to accept it! Juſtify my conduct, as far as it will bear juſtification, in this affair: you may do it with truth and honour, and I will thank you for the deed: but when that is over, think of me no more!"

Sir Edgar, thunderſtruck at this ſpeech, with an air of mingled pride and ſorrow, inſtantly dropped her hand; and turning ſilently from her, began walking about the room, in great agitation, without once looking up, or truſting himſelf to ſpeak to her again.

Clarentine pauſed a moment at the door to obſerve him. Her heart almoſt reproached her for the ſufferings ſhe had inflicted; ſhe ſighed, and ſtill involuntarily lingered, till hearing a noiſe above, ſhe ſoftly whiſpered a parting benediction, and haſtened away.

She

She had not been gone three minutes, when, accompanied by Mrs. Harrington, who had been up ſtairs on purpoſe to call her, Lady Delmington entered the room.

Sir Edgar ſtarted at their ſight, and would have ruſhed paſt them without ſpeaking, but his mother gently, yet half-reproachfully calling him back, ſaid—

"Edgar, why ſhould you avoid me? If you have done no wrong, you can fear no remonſtrances; and if you *have*, you are too candid not to hear them with patience!"

Soothed, and calmed, by the mildneſs of this addreſs, Sir Edgar reſpectfully approached her, took her hand, and preſſing it to his lips, ſaid—

"Ah! dear Madam, ſpare me to-night! my heart has already been tortured beyond endurance! I am ill, I am extremely diſturbed. Suffer me then to leave you now, and in the morning I will attend you as early as you pleaſe."

"Upon that condition, my ſon," anſwered Lady Delmington, "I willingly releaſe you. Go, my dear boy, and may heaven reſtore you to happineſs and tranquillity."

So ſaying, ſhe put into his hand a light; remarked with grief the emotion ſtill depicted in his countenance, and after accompanying him to his own door, took leave of Mrs. Harrington and went back to her room.

CHAP. VII.

BEFORE ſix o'clock the next morning, Mrs. Harrington rang for her woman, and ſent her to ſummon Harriet and Sophia to her bed-ſide.

The inſtant this meſſage was delivered, Sophia, extremely provoked at being thus diſturbed, exclaimed, "Has your miſtreſs no conſcience, Mrs. Sutton? Does ſhe really believe, that after going to bed at paſt two o'clock we can riſe again at ſix? Pray tell her it is impoſſible to think of it; cloſe the curtain and leave the room."

Then turning round again, ſhe declared ſhe would ſend no other anſwer.

Applying

Applying next to Harriet—"Well Miſs," ſaid the maid, "will *you* attend my miſtreſs? She told me ſhe had ſomething very particular to ſay to you, and unleſs you go to her, ſhe will moſt likely come to you."—

"Was ever any thing ſo tormenting!" cried Harriet, rubbing her eyes—"What can ſhe want with us? Sophy, do get up, and ſtep to her a moment; you can come back and lay down again afterwards, you know."

"Very much obliged to you!" anſwered Sophy, "the propoſal is particularly friendly! Ay, good Mrs. Sutton, pray go away and don't diſtract us any longer."

"So then," cried Mrs. Sutton, "neither of you will riſe?" "Yes, yes!" anſwered Harriet, peeviſhly, "*I* will.—Go, and tell her ſo, therefore; and for heaven ſake, don't let her come to us!"

"No," ſaid Sophia, "I beg you won't; for bad habits are not ſo ſoon got rid of."

In a very few minutes, Harriet, in her night-cap and dreſſing gown, was at Mrs. Harrington's bed-ſide.

Raiſing herſelf up the moment ſhe ſaw her, "Fine doings, child," cried ſhe, "in the houſe laſt night! Pray did you hear no noiſe about three o'clock?"

"No, Madam," anſwered Harriet, much ſurpriſed at this beginning, "what was the matter?"

Mrs. Harrington then entered into an exaggerated detail of all that had paſſed; ſpoke of Clarentine in terms of opprobrium the moſt illiberal; coarſely and unfeelingly accuſed Lady Delmington of being the indirect cauſe of her ſon's ruin, and ended by proteſting ſhe would never ceaſe urging her, till Clarentine was finally baniſhed the houſe.

Harriet, amazed at this recital, was, for ſome minutes after the loquacious ſpeaker pauſed, incapable of uttering a word. At length however, feeling ſome concern for her brother, ſhe ſaid—

"And what became of poor Edgar when he ſaw you?"

"What became of him? Why, he behaved with a degree of inſolence, I never ſhall forgive; openly eſpouſed the cauſe of the wretch who has miſguided him; and ſet my remonſtrances completely at defiance.

defiance. Your mother, however, has given me great hopes, ſhe will no more permit her henceforward to reſide here; ſhe leaves the houſe in two hours, decidedly, I flatter myſelf, for life. Go not near her, before ſhe ſets off; and give the ſame caution to Sophia."

Harriet, without making any comment upon what ſhe had heard, was then leaving the room; but at the door Mrs. Harrington called her back.

"Stop, child, ſtop!" cried ſhe, "you have been told of the projected marriage between your worthleſs brother and Lady Julia Leyburne? I do not deſpair yet of ſeeing it accompliſhed: but for that purpoſe ſhe muſt be kept in profound ignorance of all that has paſt. That wretched girl cannot infatuate him for ever! If we can but remove her entirely from his ſight, place her totally beyond his reach, I have not the leaſt doubt of bringing him to his ſenſes. Go then, and be careful you ſay nothing before Lady Julia that can lead to a diſcovery!"

Harriet promiſed obedience, and was at length ſuffered to depart.

When ſhe got back to her own room, ſhe found Sophia aſleep. Her eagerneſs to impart the wonders ſhe had heard allowed her not, however, to let her reſt undiſturbed; the inſtant ſhe reached the bed-ſide, throwing the curtains wide open, ſhe exclaimed—

"O, Sophy! I have ſuch news to tell you!"

"News!" ſaid Sophia, yawning, "Is the dear old Harrington going?"

"No, no—but Edgar—you'll never believe what I have to ſay about him!"

"Has he ſold his coat?" cried Sophia —"pawned his ſhirt?"

"Nonſenſe! what an abſurd queſtion!"

"Not ſo abſurd, perhaps, as you may imagine! but tell me, what *has* he done?"

"Why laſt night," ſaid Harriet, ſitting down upon the bed, and aſſuming all the ſignificant importance of an old village-goſſip, "when every body elſe in the houſe was aſleep, he and Clarentine were diſcovered together in the parlour."

"What?" interrupted Sophia, eagerly ſtarting up, "What did you ſay?"

"That in the middle of the night," returned Harriet, "Mrs. Harrington ſurpriſed

priſed Edgar at Clarentine's feet! that in conſequence of this, Clarentine is no more to be permitted to return here, nor even before ſhe goes, to be ſeen or ſpoken to by any body!"

"What abominable ſcandal have you been picking up!" cried Sophia, glowing with indignation—"For ſhame, Harriet! How can you repeat, with an appearance of ſo much glee, ſuch paltry tittle tattle? I don't believe a ſingle word of the whole ſtory; and notwithſtanding Mrs. Harrington, ſhall get up and go to poor Clarentine directly.

"You had better not," ſaid Harriet drily, "ſhe ſtrictly forbade it, and ordered me to come and tell you ſo."

"Till mama forbids it," ſaid Sophia, beginning in haſte to riſe, "I think myſelf at liberty to do as I pleaſe. If *you* can ſo eaſily renounce a near relation, a friend, *I* cannot, nay, I *will not?*"

"So then," ſaid Harriet, "you believe this is entirely my invention?"

"No, I don't, Clarentine and Edgar may have been ſeen together; may in the middle of the night, diſturbed by the thunder, have met in the parlour: but I

never perſuade myſelf it was any thing except chance that occaſioned it. She is a modeſt, an excellent girl; and would no more conſent to a private aſſignation with him, at ſuch improper hours, than ſhe would fly!"

During this little dialogue, having dreſſed herſelf with the utmoſt expedition, ſhe was moving towards the door, when it was ſuddenly opened, and Lady Delmington, pale and breathleſs, appeared—

"My dear girls," cried ſhe, throwing herſelf into a chair, "your brother—my unhappy Edgar, is ill—very ill!"

The two girls ſtarted, and flew to her.

"Dear Madam," cried Sophia, "have you ſent for any body? Oh, let me go to him!"

"No, no, my love!" exclaimed her mother, alarmed at this propoſal, "his diſorder may be infectious! go not near his room till the phyſician has ſeen him; I have ſent for one from Lyſton."

"How did you know he was ill, Madam? ſaid Harriet, "have you been to him?"

"Yes, I ſent my woman up, a quarter of an hour ago, to deſire he would let me ſpeak

ſpeak to him before breakfaſt; ſhe brought me word down he was unable to riſe, and to all appearance was extremely ill. I inſtantly haſtened to him, and found him in a burning fever, motionleſs, and quite inſenſible! The houſekeeper is ſitting by him during my abſence, and I am now impatiently expecting the arrival of the phyſician."

"Alas! dear Madam," cried Sophia in a voice of ſupplication, "and are we, in addition to our concern on Edgar's account, to be ſo utterly forbidden the ſight of Clarentine before ſhe goes? Is it true ſhe has ſo deeply offended you?"

"My Sophia," anſwered Lady Delmington, "ſhe has leſs offended than grieved me. I know not how to act with regard to her, how to diſpoſe of, how to behave to her. She has involved us all in the cruelleſt perplexity; made your brother miſerable; and ſullied her own character. Yet, ſtill I cannot forget ſhe was your father's niece; cannot forget her youth, her inexperience; nor the blame I myſelf deſerve, for having expoſed her to a trial ſhe was ſo unequal to. Where I can place her, heaven only knows!

knows! If you very much wiſh it, however, you may ſee, and take leave of her, though I cannot."

Sophia, in token of gratitude for this permiſſion, ſilently kiſſed her mother's hand, and ran out of the room.

On entering that of Clarentine, ſhe was ſupriſed to find it already deſerted, and with much vexation was turning back, when, as ſhe paſſed the dreſſing table, a ſealed note, directed to her, caught her eye. She took it up, and breaking it open, found in it theſe words:

MISS SOPHIA DELMINGTON.

"Before my deareſt Sophia reads this note, I ſhall have left the houſe. I cannot encounter diſgrace, nor am I ſufficiently hardened to defy contempt. Of all I leave behind me, you alone do I dare addreſs, for you alone will credit me perhaps, when I ſolemnly plead, *not guilty!* Appearances may be againſt me: but the heart of my Sophia, I am perſuaded, never will. Think of me, therefore, as kindly as you can, and write to me if you are allowed. Adieu. Heaven bleſs you!"

This

This unaffected note, in which no attempt was made to excite compaſſion, no weak lamentations poured forth, and no bitterneſs of complaint indulged, gave Sophia the utmoſt pleaſure; and would have been alone ſufficient, had ſhe not already in her own mind exculpated her friend, to have convinced her that the perſon who could write ſo temperately at ſuch a moment, muſt be ſupported by an internal conſciouſneſs of rectitude, and a firm perſuaſion of her own innocence.

Meeting Emma upon the ſtairs, ſhe aſked her how long Clarentine had been gone?

"Not a quarter of an hour," anſwered the child; "Madame d'Arzele came for her ſooner than ſhe expected: but as ſhe never had her cloaths off the whole night, and only lay down a little while on the outſide of the bed, ſhe was ready in a moment."

Then lowering her voice with an air of myſtery, ſhe added,

"I don't know what was the matter, but ſhe cried ſadly as ſhe was going away, and when I wiſhed her good by, held me in

in her arms, and kiſſed me, without being able to ſpeak a ſingle word."

Sophia, extremely affected by this account, ſcarcely had power to refrain from tears herſelf. The character of Clarentine, "jealous in honour," and full of ſenſibility as it was, ſhe knew too well, not to feel deeply for the diſtreſs of heart ſhe muſt endure, when quitting the houſe under imputations ſo diſgraceful, unſupported by the ſoothing expectation of ever being entirely abſolved, and even uncertain whether her return to it would ever be permitted.

Yet, notwithſtanding the conviction her note brought to the mind of Sophia, ſhe ventured not to communicate it to her mother, ſince, to one who believed her guilty, it might appear too much to border upon a ſpirit of independence and pride, moderate as it was; and ſince nothing, ſhe was certain, but the extremeſt humility and the deepeſt contrition could now gain her any indulgence. For this reaſon, therefore, ſhe carefully concealed its contents, and deferred anſwering it till evening, when being releaſed by Harriet from her attendance upon her brother, ſhe

ſhe ſhut herſelf up in her own room, and wrote as follows:

MISS DELMINGTON.

"You judge rightly, deareſt Clarentine, when you ſay, *my heart can never be againſt you!* What are *appearances*, compared to a life blameleſs as yours has been for 17 years? Such a life ought alone to eſtabliſh confidence, and preclude ſuſpicion. As for me, you will I hope eaſily credit me, when I tell you, I believed you innocent from the moment I heard the charge brought againſt you; and were the whole world to raiſe its voice in your accuſation, till its authority was rendered unqueſtionable by *poſitive proof*, I never ſhould put any faith in its report. Why ſhould an unblemiſhed reputation, a fair and ſpotleſs character be coveted, if, upon trial, neither will avail to ſhield us from injuſtice? Thoſe who have chearfully practiſed all the duties of their ſtation, who for years, have poſſeſſed, and merited the approbation and eſteem of all who knew them, deſerve not ſurely, that on the firſt equivocal action of their lives, *ſurpriſe* ſhould be converted into *doubt*—and *doubt* into *determined condemnation!*

"But

" But let me not dwell longer upon this ungrateful ſubject. We underſtand each other too well for it to be neceſſary, *I* ſhould loſe time in telling you how little I ſuſpect you; or *you* ſhould ſpend yours in uſeleſs vindication; I aſk for none—I require none: but I ſhould be rejoiced above meaſure, were you to write to me ſuch an account, plain, ſimple, and undiſguiſed, of this ſtrange buſineſs, as I could ſafely ſhew my mother. You know her, my Clarentine; you know how open her liberal mind is to conviction; how ready her generous heart is to forget and pardon. That ſhe certainly is, at preſent, uncommonly incenſed, I will not pretend to conceal from you. Had the circumſtances of the caſe been even leſs ſuſpicious than they were, the pains that *have* been, and hourly *are* taken, to prejudice her againſt you, could hardly have failed in their effect; ſince, as you will believe, no malicious aggravations are ſpared, no unfavourable interpretations omitted, that can conduce towards effectually eradicating you from her heart. Yet fear not, my own Clarentine—that heart ſtill whiſpers many kind things

things to her in your behalf; and truth and innocence *muſt*, in the end, prevail!

" You may wonder perhaps, and naturally, that for the detail I ſolicit, I apply not to Edgar himſelf. Blame him not however, too raſhly; nor, for one moment, believe ſo ill of him, as to imagine, he would have neglected doing you all the juſtice, and making you all the reparation in his power, had he been in a ſituation to have undertaken the explanation I aſk—Alas! my dear Clarentine—I know not even if, from *him*, it can *ever* be obtained! Judge of my mother's—judge of our affliction! By turns ſpeechleſs or delirious, he now lies in a raging fever, unconſcious of our diſtreſs, and inſenſible of his own danger. The phyſician who viſited him this morning, on hearing of the party he was engaged in yeſterday, attributed his illneſs to what he termed, *an exceſs of conviviality*, and gave us to underſtand, it was chiefly owing to his having firſt heated his blood by drinking more than he was accuſtomed to, and then by hard riding. Perhaps theſe two cauſes might contribute, in ſome degree, to produce the effect we ſo much lament; but that they were

were the *ſole* cauſes, it is impoſſible, knowing the extreme agitation he afterwards underwent, to believe. A moderate degree of attachment, a very cool head, and a more unfeeling heart would, I ſuſpect, notwithſtanding the *exceſſes* he is ſuppoſed to have run into, have better preſerved him from the ſufferings he now endures, than the temperance I every moment hear ſo warmly extolled; ſince its limits were ſo ſlightly infringed, that I, who ſaw and ſpoke to him, before I left the parlour, ſcarcely perceived that he was at all diſordered.

" As for my mother, I am convinced that in her heart, *ſhe* puts no more faith in this opinion than *I* do, though ſhe endeavours, and finds a ſpecies of conſolation in attempting it, to perſuade us ſhe does. I own myſelf, it is much pleaſanter to believe his illneſs ariſes from circumſtances merely accidental, ſuch as will give way to proper attendance, and medical ſkill, than to acknowledge its germ lies in his heart, and its cure in her power!

" Lady Julia means to write to you to-morrow; in your anſwer, my Clarentine,

tine, forbear, I beſeech you, to give her the ſlighteſt hint concerning any thing that has paſſed. It is thought right here to keep her in profound ignorance upon the ſubject; our *Supérieure* has ſo decreed it, and ſeems to think, if the projected alliance can but be brought to bear, it is of very little conſequence upon what terms —with how much anguiſh to one party, or with what proſpects to the other.— Very humane policy, it muſt be allowed!

" We heard from my brother Frederick to-day. He is no longer in the ſame ſhip with Mr. Somerſet, which he ſeems to lament extremely. They parted ſoon after Somerſet was made poſt-captain, and Frederick, who is now ſtationed in the Mediterranean, knows not exactly where his friend has been ordered, but believes he is in the Weſt Indies.

" Adieu, deareſt Clarentine. My heart is very ſad, and my letter not very conſolatory; but in ſuch a houſe, and under ſuch impreſſions it would be difficult to write with higher ſpirits.

" A thouſand loves to Madame d'Arzele, and compliments to the Chevalier.

When

When does he return? Send your anſwer by him, and beg he will ſeize the firſt opportunity of delivering it to me privately. After that, I will let you know whether you may ſafely write to me in the uſual way, by poſt.

"Once more, my Clarentine, adieu.

"S. D."

The three firſt days that ſucceeded the writing this letter, were marked by no material changes in Sir Edgar, and no circumſtances of moment in the family. On the morning of the fourth, however, the Chevalier de Valcour, in his way from Sidmouth to Welwyn Park, ſtopped for a few minutes at Delmington, and found means, before he left the houſe, of delivering the following letter to Sophia.

Sidmouth, July 13.

MISS S. DELMINGTON.

"The charge of ſecrecy with which you conclude your affectionate letter, my ever-kind Sophia, alarms me ſo much on your account, that I now anſwer it with the moſt fearful miſtruſt and apprehenſion.

henſion. You own it not; yet, I can have no doubt you were prohibited from holding any correſpondence with me.—Oh why, my deareſt girl! for one who is deemed undeſerving ſuch an indulgence, why incur ſuch a riſk? Had not the apprehenſion of appearing to you ungrateful, or negligent, urged me, even in oppoſition to my own judgment, too ſtrongly to be reſiſted, believe me, I never ſhould have found courage, after ſuch a caution, to have addreſſed you, by any conveyance whatever. Pray Heaven I may not be involving you in any portion of my own diſgrace, by venturing upon ſo hazardous an experiment! It would quite break my heart, were that to be the caſe! Write to me no more, therefore, I beſeech you.—Tempt me not again to engage you in ſuch danger; to have forborne anſwering ſo friendly a letter as your laſt would have been impoſſible; and yet I tremble to think what you may ſuffer by my doing it!

"I ſee, my Sophia, notwithſtanding the generous anxiety with which you endeavour to chear me with better hopes,

I ſee

I ſee plainly, I am now become an utter exile from your houſe! I have loſt the only tie that could ever bind me to your mother's heart, her good opinion; and I fear, *irrecoverably* loſt it; at leaſt, if I muſt depend for its reſtoration on my own juſtification; ſince, at ſuch a moment as this, while your unhappy brother lies in the dreadful ſtate you deſcribe to me, no ſelfiſh conſiderations upon earth, no proſpect of perſonal advantage, however great, could induce me to enter the liſts as his accuſer. Let my vindication, therefore, reſt where it is, for the preſent; and ſuffer me at leaſt to delay entering upon the ſubject, till I hear better tidings of Sir Edgar, and can do it with leſs pain to his mother's feelings. At this time there would be a hardened inſenſibility, a want of decency, in beginning ſuch an explanation, I ſhudder but to think of; nor could I do it, even to regain what I moſt prize in the world, Lady Delmington's eſteem! It would ſeem to me, almoſt like raking up the aſhes of the dead. It would be unpardonable, it would be cruel!

"Madame d'Arzele, whoſe tenderneſs and whoſe near affinity give her a ſort of claim to the moſt unlimited confidence, has wrung from me, reluctant as I was to make ſuch a diſcloſure, even to her, every circumſtance of this heart breaking affair. She ſaw me depreſſed, and wretched, beyond all power of concealment; and ſo deeply partook in, ſo ſoothingly compaſſionated my affliction, that I found a ſpecies of conſolation in pouring out all my ſorrows into her affectionate boſom. She has fortified and calmed me; given me courage, I think, to bear with reſignation whatever ſentence is to be pronounced againſt me; and taught me, I hope, with thankfulneſs for the paſt, to ſubmit unrepiningly to the future.

"I have thought much, as you will believe, of my own ſituation, and thought of it with the moſt ſerious anxiety. It would be madneſs, I fear, let my future defence have what effect it may, to expect that my reſidence in your family ſhould, during the preſent ſtate of affairs, be again allowed. My requeſt therefore is, that whenever the decree of baniſhment, I

look forward to with ſuch dread, is pronounced, I may be permitted to go to Mr. Lenham's, whom I have every reaſon to hope will, at leaſt for a time, admit me. If Lady Delmington, however, has other views for me, ſhe may reſt aſſured of my humbleſt concurrence: but it ſeems far more probable, ſhe will rejoice, amidſt ſo many other cares, to be exempted from any additional one, and that conſequently, I may rely upon her giving a ready ſanction to my petition.

"This morning, I received a kind, but melancholy letter from Lady Julia. Whilſt I peruſed it, how did I bleſs heaven that I had it ſtill in my power to read the expreſſions of attachment and confidence with which ſhe honours me, with unbluſhing cheeks, and a conſciouſneſs of not having forfeited by ill-conduct the friendſhip ſhe has hitherto profeſſed for me. To a guilty mind, every partial ſentence that fell from her pen would have been a ſtab; to me, my deareſt Sophia, they were as balm, my wounded ſpirit required; and the tears I ſhed over the whole letter, were literally tears of luxury and enjoyment.

"I am

"I am rejoiced to find you have heard from Frederick. At ſuch a period as this, how welcome to his mother's heart muſt have been the tidings of his health and ſafety, mine bounded with pleaſure, for her ſake, at the news.

"Would to heaven, I too could hear from Mr. Somerſet! Might he not have written to me, dear Sophia, before he embarked upon ſo diſtant an expedition? Will *he* alſo, do you think, caſt me off—forget all his paſt regard, and concern himſelf about me no more? Alas! this is not the time he ſhould have choſen for ſuch a deſertion! when every word of kindneſs is ſo precious, I can leſs bear than ever to loſe the conſolation his remembrance would have afforded me. Often, often have I thought of him, ſince I left your houſe. How are all his predictions verified. Oh! could he but know what an unerring prophet he has proved, with what regret, unleſs he has changed indeed, would he reflect upon the additional ſorrow his neglect muſt occaſion me!

"But my deareſt Sophia, I ought to apologize for theſe irrational murmurs.

Unhappineſs, I believe, makes egotiſts of us all; and as the friend of the unhappy, you muſt learn to bear with their infirmities. I will give way to ſuch gloomy reflections, however, no longer, but haſten to a leſs unpleaſant ſubject.

"Our ſweet little Eugenie begins already, I think, to find benefit from the change of air. She has bathed twice ſince our arrival, and bore it extremely well. Her dear mother views her improved looks, with a degree of tranſport I can give you no idea of; and but for the dejection I involuntarily caſt over it, ours would be the moſt chearful little ſociety in the world.

"The Chevalier has promiſed to give us frequent accounts of Sir Edgar. I implored he would, leſt my anxiety reſpecting him, overpowering my own ſcruples, ſhould induce me to write again to you for intelligence.

"I venture not, in the clandeſtine manner I now addreſs you, to recommend myſelf to your honoured mother, nor even to include my good wiſhes to our ſiſters; my prayers are all I dare offer up, either for them, or for Sir Edgar; and

and that they may be accepted is the moſt fervent wiſh of my heart.

"And now, my beſt Sophia, farewel; probably, "a long farewel." Love me; think of me ſometimes, however diſtant; and be aſſured of the tendereſt, and moſt grateful affection, of

"Your own,

"CLARENTINE DELMINGTON."

Deeply affected by the contents of a letter, in many places, ſo generous, in all ſo ſimple and ſo touching, Sophia could not reſiſt the ſtrong impulſe ſhe felt, the firſt moment Sir Edgar's amended ſtate of health allowed her to enter upon the ſubject, to communicate it to her mother. She was perſuaded that the paſſage in particular, which accounted for Clarentine's ſilence with regard to her own vindication, could not fail making the moſt ſenſible impreſſion upon ſuch a mind as Lady Delmington's; and might conduce more towards reinſtating her in her heart, than the ſtrongeſt aſſeverations, or even the deareſt proofs of innocence, unſeaſonably brought forward,

In this opinion ſhe found herſelf fully juſtified by the event. Lady Delmington, overcome by the delicacy, the gentleneſs of ſpirit that breathed throughout the whole letter, wept over it with mingled ſenſations of tenderneſs and admiration; and when ſhe came to its concluſion, warmly exclaimed—

"Amiable, and excellent girl! oh, where ſhall I find courage, after this, to go through the painful taſk I am enjoined, to announce to her the deciſion that has been paſt?"

"What deciſion, deareſt Madam?" fearfully enquired Sophia; "Is it poſſible, have you really conſented?"

"Aſk me no queſtions, Sophia," interrupted Lady Delmington, "I cannot revoke the reluctant promiſes I have given, nor can I bear to dwell longer upon the ſubject. Leave me then for the preſent. I ſhall write to your poor friend this evening, and ſhew you my letter before it goes. Let *that* anſwer all your objections."

Sophia retired with a heavy and foreboding heart; and early the following morning was ſummoned to her mother's dreſſing-

dreſſing-room, to hear the dreaded ſentence ſhe had been taught to expect.

MISS DELMINGTON.

Delmington-Houſe, July 6th.

"The ſight of my hand-writing will, I doubt not, equally aſtoniſh and alarm you: but diveſt yourſelf of all apprehenſions, Clarentine; it is as little my purpoſe to ſhock you by uſeleſs recriminations, as to miſlead you by deluſive promiſes! I write with a determination of ſpeaking openly and frankly to you; and of putting an end at once to a ſtate of uncertainty, I know ſo well how to pity.

"Now, therefore, let me own, my ſtill-dear Clarentine, that the unfortunate paſſion of my ſon, however the violence with which it at laſt burſt forth may have diſtreſſed, has not, for one moment, ſurpriſed me. I have long entertained a vague ſuſpicion of this nature, which being ſtrengthened by the inſinuations of others, almoſt aroſe at one time to poſitive conviction. Then, you will ſay, would have been the proper ſeaſon to have devited ſome effectual check to its further

further progreſs; true: but we are not always aware of the danger of procraſtination, and your extreme youth at that period; the ſeparation that ſhortly after took place between you and Edgar; other cares; and above all, the difficulty of finding a more eligible abode for you, diverted me from my deſign, and led me to ſilence, as groundleſs, every intruſive apprehenſion.

"Edgar's conduct ever after, whether dictated by acquired caution, or reſulting from natural reſerve, was ſo aſtoniſhingly guarded; his behaviour to you betrayed ſo little of the *lover*, I may almoſt add, of the *friend*, that till this extraordinary diſcovery laid his heart open before us, I queſtion if a ſingle individual of my family, Mrs. Harrington and myſelf alone excepted, had ever conceived the ſlighteſt idea of his attachment.

"The caſe is now changed; and he who, when a mother's watchful eye fearfully obſerved him, had ſufficient command over his paſſions, to conceal and reſtrain them, in one unguarded moment, when all diſtruſt was over, and all vigilance at an end, turned traitor to himſelf,

ſelf, and wantonly betrayed his *own*, and, ah Clarentine! I greatly fear, *your* ſecret alſo!

"But of this I have no right, no wiſh to be informed. As circumſtances now ſtand, ſuch a confeſſion would only add to my concern for you, without enabling me to flatter you with the moſt diſtant hope. I might lament over you: but as I cannot ſerve you, leave me, at leaſt, the conſolation of a *doubt* upon this ſubject.

"Favoured, and beloved as you have ever been by Lady Julia Leyburne, I cannot ſuppoſe ſhe wholly concealed from you the treaty that was in agitation between her father and myſelf. I may therefore venture to ſpeak to you of it, without diſguiſe.

"Independant of the noble income Lady Julia will bring my ſon, an income which, conſidering the narrow limits of his own, and the large deductions from it that muſt be made in order to pay his ſiſters' fortunes, becomes almoſt indiſpenſable to the eaſe and comfort of his remaining life. She is the woman whom, amidſt thouſands, I would have ſelected,

as

as the one moſt likely to render him happy.

"Allowing for the natural timidity of her temper, the domeſtic education ſhe has received, and the life of unvarying retirement ſhe has led, I obſerve in her the ſeeds of every good quality that can be deſired. The helpleſs indolence that formerly marked her diſpoſition gives place to greater energy every day. She is ſincere, generous, and benevolent; and by the placid meekneſs that characteriſes her, ſeems to me, of all others, the wife beſt ſuited to one, who already announces a temper ſo impetuous and ardent as Edgar.

"Thus far then, I am juſtified in wiſhing for this match. It enſures affluence and independence to himſelf; the certainty of being able to provide handſomely for his ſiſters; the proſpect of becoming heir to Mrs. Harrington; and the faireſt hopes, if reaſoned gently into compliance, of his enjoying, ever after, a ſtate of domeſtic peace and ſerenity.

"Now, ſuffer me to reverſe the picture: ſuffer me to trace a faint ſketch of the evils that, in my opinion, would follow

low his union with you; nor imagine, dear Clarentine, that my purpoſe is to wound or inſult you by the compariſon. Far be ſuch an intention from my heart. No, my love; to warn and caution you is all I have in view. My language would be the ſame to either of my own daughters, in the ſame circumſtances.

" To ſpeak firſt, therefore, of the diſſimilarity of your tempers; Edgar's, irritable, though ſoon ſubdued; often captious, violent, and unreaſonable, would make the torment of your life; ſince clear-ſighted, and penetrating as you are, his ſtarts of irrational paſſion could never eſcape you, nor conſequently, ever fail either grieving, or alarming you. Not ſo Lady Julia. Abſent in converſation; ſeldom animated enough to be ſenſible of what is paſſing around her, his cauſeleſs reſentment, unleſs directed againſt herſelf, would ſcarcely awaken her attention, and never reach her heart. Injuſtice, ſhe has not diſcrimination ſufficient to diſtinguiſh, nor expoſtulation, courage enough to hazard; by her, therefore, he would eſcape uncondemned; and by him, ſhe would live undiſturbed. His kindneſs to

herſelf would be all ſhe would require; and indifferent to his general conduct, nothing would wound, becauſe nothing would ſtrike her except his neglect.

"Would this Clarentine—aſk your own heart—would this be your caſe? "Tremblingly alive all o'er," would not you feel as ſenſibly for others as for yourſelf? Could you, an unconcerned witneſs of [illegible] iraſcibility, endure to ſit tamely by, without attempting, either by reaſon or ſupplication, to moderate and appeaſe him? No, you could not; and what would be the conſequence? By ſeeking to reſtrain, you would inflame him; and by uttering, or even *looking* diſapprobation, however deſerved, you would bring down upon your own head the wrath originally aimed at others. From an object paſſionately beloved, reproof, though only implied by a geſture, or a glance, is harder to be borne, and ſinks deeper into the heart, than from any other quarter; and Edgar, naturally enclined to jealouſy, anxious for your eſteem, and but too ready to take alarm at the ſlighteſt appearance of its failure, would ſuffer himſelf, and impoſe upon you, every torment that

that apprehended indifference, or contempt, could inflict.

"I have been thus explicit, my dearest girl, with regard to my doubts concerning the probable event of a marriage which, to Edgar at least, now appears so desirable, in the hope of proving to you, that *all* my objections to it are not the result of ambitious and interested considerations. Heaven preserve me from ever wishing to aggrandize or enrich my family at the expence of his or your lasting misery! He shall be allowed time for mature deliberation, before I again urge, or even converse with him upon the subject; and the only thing I ask of him or of you is, that from this time forward to the period of his coming of age, you will forbear holding any correspondence with, and avoid every opportunity of meeting each other. Meanwhile, as it would appear to me dishonourable in the extreme, to deceive Lord Welwyn in an affair of so much consequence to himself, as well as his daughter, I purpose laying frankly before him the exact state of the case; leaving it to him to decide whether he chooses still to

adhere to his engagement, and wait the moment of my ſon's final deciſion before he enters into any other, or whether he prefers, at once, breaking off the match.

"My firm opinion is, that his partiality in Edgar's favour is ſo great, that nothing but abſolute neceſſity will induce him to withdraw his word. I may be miſtaken; yet, at all events Clarentine, we muſt whilſt this negotiation is depending—we muſt be ſeparated. Lady Julia may never be my daughter: but ſtill, alas! ſuch is the rigorous duty my ſituation and my judgment enjoin me, that I dare not give an appearance of ſuch encouragement to Edgar's love, as he might naturally imply from your being continued under the ſame roof with him, after his attachment to you has been made public.

"My heart bleeds for you, my gentle Clarentine, whilſt I compel myſelf to perform this unwelcome part. The day perhaps may come, however, when even *you* will acknowledge I have acted right; and when, having preſerved Edgar from the commiſſion of an act of injuſtice towards his ſiſters, and you from conſe-

quent

quent ſelf-reproach, I may be thought to merit bleſſings, where now I ſeem only to deſerve condemnation.

" Your requeſt of being allowed to repair to Mr. Lenham's meets with my fulleſt approbation. Write to him, my love, to enquire whether he can admit you, and to ſettle with him the terms of your board; whatever thoſe terms may be, I ſhall unheſitatingly comply with them, and beg you will tranſmit to me his anſwer the moment it arrives.

" As I ſhall endeavour to the utmoſt of my power to conceal from my ſon the place of your future abode, you would eſſentially oblige me by deferring to communicate it to Lady Julia, till I can be aſſured he will make no attempt to follow you. By requeſting her letters may be directed to you, under cover to any third perſon you may chooſe to appoint for that purpoſe, after your arrival in town, this may be eaſily effected, and may perhaps ſave me from much perplexity and diſtreſs. To Sophia, as I can ſo entirely depend upon her, you have my readieſt conſent to write as often as you wiſh; yet—oh! forgive theſe too ne-

ceſſary precautions—yet, even to her, leſt accident ſhould betray what I ſo anxiouſly deſire to keep ſecret, I would recommend to you always to ſend your letters incloſed to Madame d'Arzele.

"It is time now, my deareſt Clarentine, I ſhould come to the concluſion of this long, and I fear you will think unfriendly explanation. I grieve to be obliged, for one inſtant, to give pain to your generous heart; nor can you feel deeper regret on receiving, than I do in announcing, this ſentence of temporary baniſhment. Let one circumſtance, however, be your conſolation; I acquit you, as well from my knowledge of your paſt rectitude, as from the teſtimony of Edgar himſelf, and the ſentiments contained in your letter to Sophia, of every ſpecies of blame, and of every ſuſpicion injurious to your character; and rejoice in being able to aſſure you, that you have not at this moment in the world a friend, who thinks more highly of your principles and worth, than your ſincere, and ever moſt truly affectionate,

"H. DELMINGTON."

END OF VOL. I.

ERRATA TO VOL. I.

Page 8, line 20, *for* into, *read* on to. Page 11, l. 21, *for* Frederick, *r.* William. Ib. l. 23. Page 86, l. 6, *for* Frederick again, *r.* William. Page 104, l. 15, *for* Fears, *r.* Tears. Page 127, laſt line, *for* le miene, *r.* la mienne. Page 128, l. 21, *for* puiſe, *r.* puiſſe. Page 133, l. 14, *for* ponce, *r.* pouce. Ib. l. 20, *for* Compte, *r.* Comte. Page 135, l. 11, *for* le, *r.* la. Page 144, l. 15, *for* vous, *r.* vos. Page 146, l. 19, *for* coup-d'ouil, *r.* coup-d'oeil. Ib. l. 20, *for* apreſant, *r.* à preſant. Page 153, l. 6, *for* fineſs, *r.* fineſſe. Page 158, l. 1, *for* aviſir, *r.* aviſée. Page 166, motto to Book II. l. 1, *for* infance. *r.* enfance. Page 183, l. 3, *for* endeavouring, *r.* endeavour. Page 217, l. 4, *r.* fund, not *fund.* Page 228, l. 9, *for* deſigns, *r.* deigns. Page 271, l. 15, *for* Ay, *r.* Do.